



**C. RAJAGOPALACHARI**  
**His Life and Mind**



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**K.T. Narasimha Char**





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# Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	1
1. The Coming Man	8
2. The Impact of Mahatma Gandhi	13
3. The Freedom Fighter	25
4. The Fighter for Freedom	38
5. A Defender of Democracy	55
6. The Internationalist	63
7. A Crusader for World Peace	78
8. The Champion of the Underdog	86
9. The Religious Background	95
10. A Devotee of Dharma	106
11. Interpreter of Indian Culture	114
12. Eminence as a Writer	129
13. The India of Rajaji's Dreams	154
14. The Summing Up	166
<i>Index</i>	179



## Introduction

CHAKRAVARTI Rajagopalachari or Rajaji, as he was called affectionately by millions of Indians, was a man of many parts. He achieved eminence as a statesman and administrator, writer and scholar. His erudition in Sanskrit and ancient Indian lore enabled him to render into chaste English such masterpieces as the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, enjoyed and appreciated by the intellectual and the illiterate alike all over India. His deep knowledge of Tamil and its rich literature resulted in his translation into English of such classics as the *Kural* of Tiruvalluvar in his own inimitable style. He was also the author of original parables in Tamil in the manner of the *Hutopadesa*. He interpreted the culture and philosophy of India revealed in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and other teachings of the ancient *Rishis* and sages that have inspired and illumined generations of men and women from the dawn of civilization.

He was not content merely to garb the glories of Indian thought and literature, at the peak of their performance, in present-day language. He made it a mission of his life to continue to spread the message of his Master, Mahatma Gandhi, to his own countrymen and to the world. For he was the one man among all the lieutenants of the Mahatma who followed the Gandhian way of life in thought, word and action. No doubt there were matters on which he differed from his leader in the realm of politics. But the love between the two kindred spirits, both in quest of a life of the spirit and in their loyalty

to each other, never wavered even for a moment. They were like Sri Rama and Lakshmana and the passing away of the Mahatma on the 30th January 1948, killed by an assassin's bullets, was a wound from which Rajaji bled all his life. He made it his duty thereafter to discourse to his own people and to mankind, in the press and on the platform, on all subjects affecting the welfare of humanity, from the need to make the benefits of freedom available to the masses in India to the immediate necessity for nuclear disarmament by the Big Powers of the West, from a relentless campaign against the use of B C G. injections for the prevention of tuberculosis to an exposure of the utter immorality and foolishness of family-planning methods as a means of limiting the population of India, from pointing out the moral and economic degeneration of Indians of all classes after their independence to the consistent condemnation of the then ruling Congress Party for its sins of commission and omission in their administration.

With heroic determination he declared from the house-tops the high degree of inefficiency and corruption that polluted the government. The people had snapped the bonds of their subjection, he asserted, but the fruits of freedom were not yet within the reach of the common man while those in power were riding in pomp on the pinnacle of enjoyment of every kind. The masses were still sunk in poverty, squalor, ignorance and disease. Was this the "Rama Rajya" of Gandhiji's dreams? He lashed out in no ambiguous language against the rulers for this awful state of affairs. Often had he heard from the lips of those in authority as well as from common men that they were proud of their great ancestors. His answer to this patriotic boast of Indians was a repetition of the famous words of Paul Richard, the co-workers of Sri Aurobindo at the Pondicherry Asram, in the course of his address to the students of the Gujarat Vidyapith.

"Young men and women, you say that you are proud of your ancestors. I ask you a simple question: 'Will your ancestors be proud of you if they see you today?'"

Rajaji towered like Bhishma over the puny politicians of

present-day India, aspiring for power, greedy for gold, who are the slaves of slogans, whose philosophy is that the end justifies the means—the very antithesis of what the Father of the Nation always advocated and so ably practised! A man of vision, Rajaji could envisage the future course of events from the experiences of today. His wisdom was as much appreciated in New York as in New Delhi, in Leningrad as in London, although people there in authority failed to follow him in actual practice. The chaos and confusion into which the Big Powers, in their rivalry for supremacy in the world, have relegated the interests and welfare of the common man made Rajaji feel sad at the spectacle of such soullessness. The disappearance of moral values in the lives of men, both in the East and in the West, the complete inhibition of the individuality of man in the emergence of monolithic States at the expense of human freedom and dignity, the slow erosion of fundamental rights in India specifically guaranteed by its Constitution, made him fight for the Rights of Man and prove a formidable opponent of Communism, day in and day out. For had he not declared on a memorable occasion “Communism is Public Enemy Number One of the Country!”

His life was an epitome of his boundless faith in eternal values. Though he disclaimed all distinction as a man of rare virtues, he swore by *dharma* and fulfilled its strict injunctions. Man-made laws may be flouted, he had declared, but not *dharma*. For *dharma* is the law of God, the link between man and his Maker. Whoever violates this law of laws earns the displeasure of his Creator and is condemned to a lightless existence. So Rajaji anchored his soul in the Ocean of *dharma* and drew out of its inexhaustible wealth the ineffable gems of godliness, honour, dignity! His worldly activities masked his ceaseless quest for the Supreme. For he often echoed the immortal words of Jesus Christ: “What doth it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loseth his own soul?” He shaped his existence accordingly, always in the world and yet away from its lures in the form of power, wealth, fame. Leading an austere way of life that a saint may well envy, he aspired for little from the hands of his fellowmen but gave his all to them in service and sacrifice, scholarship and sagacity. He was one of those rare figures in the history of

mankind whose life is more eloquent than his words, whose thought transcends the trivialities of his time, who seemed to be ever in the Great Taskmaster's Eye! Rajaji was, in the language of Lord Mountbatten, "a refreshing spirit who achieved strength through humility and wisdom through faith."

As astute in political acumen as Mohamed Ali Jinnah, there was a world of difference between the Muslim leader and the "conscience-keeper" of Mahatma Gandhi. While Jinnah considered his co-religionists more important than the country of his birth, Rajaji called upon the Congress and its incomparable leader to concede Pakistan in principle so that the paramount interest of Hindu-Muslim unity and the ideal of one India might not be jeopardised. For he considered the freedom of India as of more consequence than sharing the loaves and fishes of office, once the country became independent. Imbued with this idea Rajaji resigned from the Congress when he found Mahatma Gandhi unwilling to accept his suggestion. He preferred to go into the political wilderness and plough a lonely furrow. He was, however, conscious that it would not be long before his words would prove prophetic. For on 15th August 1947 the British, on their withdrawal from the sub-continent, divided India into two independent States, India and Pakistan!

Rajaji was as great a social reformer as he was a statesman. A deep sympathy for the poor and the unfortunate, the lowly and the lost, had been inherited by him from his father, Chakravarti Iyengar, a Sanskrit scholar of the old school. He resembled Oliver Goldsmith's man of God, Dr. Primrose, and lived in his village surrounding himself with the lowly folks, extending to them his hand of love and acts of charity. Like a true follower of the great Vaishnavite saint, Sri Ramanujacharya, the father of Rajaji mingled freely with the untouchables of his village, ever ready to aid them with his advice and rendering them various services in an unostentatious manner. It has been narrated that when an untouchable family was in dire distress, Chakravarti Iyengar was their only supporter and friend, for which he was ostracised by the orthodox Hindus. This feeling for the friendless and forlorn ran in Rajaji's blood. He was among the most ardent supporters of Gandhiji in his

campaign for the removal of untouchability. If Gandhiji called untouchability a blot on the fair name of Hinduism and refused to enter temples that denied access to these fervent worshippers of God, Rajaji was largely instrumental in the implementation of his Master's ideal. He accompanied Mahatma Gandhi on his tour of South India for the removal of the interdiction against Harijan entry into Hindu shrines. He was also present on the occasion of the famous declaration by the enlightened young Maharaja of Travancore in the year 1931 throwing open for Harijan worship all temples and shrines maintained by the State in Travancore.

A second example of his untiring efforts to improve the lot of the common man is evidenced by his strong support to prohibition, which was one of the main items in the political programme of the Saint of Sevagram for the regeneration of India and attaining its independence. When the Congress accepted office and formed the government in seven of the eleven provinces in India by virtue of their success in the elections held in 1937, Rajaji became the first Chief Minister of Madras. One of his memorable acts soon afterwards was the introduction of prohibition in his own district of Salem on the occasion of the world-wide celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi's seventieth birthday, 2nd October 1939. All through his life he continued his propaganda for the enforcement of prohibition, even though it had been virtually scrapped in various degrees in India after Gandhiji's death.

Rajaji was the last of the Gandhians. He represented in his own life the radiant qualities of that Titan of the twentieth century, Mahatma Gandhi. He was the fine flower and fulfilment of the way of life shown by the Saint of Sevagram to his own people and to the world. He lived in the light of the Master after whose passing away, he became a beacon of illumination to the benighted followers of the Mahatma who had strayed from the path of righteousness.

Rajaji reminds one of that wise man of ancient Greece, Socrates. After more than two thousand years had elapsed since the great Athenian's death, here was another born in India, who called upon his countrymen not to forsake the principles that had been so consistently preached and so



consummately practised by the Father of the Nation. It saddened Rajaji deeply to see his people throw overboard the ideals of truth and non-violence, so soon after they had won their freedom through these means.

The great men of the world go their way after the fulfilment of their divinely-ordained mission on earth. But their immortal message is never lost to mankind. It becomes part of the imperishable heritage of humanity for all time, inspiring men with their vision and wisdom. After the passing away of Mahatma Gandhi, Rajaji was the lonely watchman of this ancient land of India, old and wise, which is passing through a crisis of the spirit. His lantern shone with a rare effulgence, aglow with the radiant spirit of ages, directing its rays into the dark corners of the corrupt souls of his countrymen (Day in and day out, Rajaji's voice rang out, strong and clear, pointing out the errors and follies of those in power).

Courage was the supreme trait in Rajaji's character. Throughout his life he was never afraid to differ from others on a question of principle, being always guided by his conscience. He condemned the Congress Government for its policies and programmes that had made the poor poorer, and enabled those in authority to enrich themselves at the expense of millions of their countrymen. His words fell on deaf ears but what prophet was listened to by his own people in his own time?

Rajaji was a rare combination of statesman, scholar, sage. His scholarship was such that he was able to distil the essence of ancient Indian thought into a deep draught of divine wisdom that has delighted millions all the world over. His mastery of modern lore made him work out a synthesis between religion and science that is a harmonious amalgam of ancient Indian philosophy and present-day advances in scientific discoveries. He declared that the greatest scientists today stood baffled before the mystery of the Beyond, in spite of all their researches and had to resort to the unfailing aid of religion to make them realise the existence of a Supreme Being Who has created the Universe and rules it in his own inscrutable way! He garnered the learning of the past and blended it with the knowledge of the present, pointing out in conclusion that *Vedanta* is the most satisfying answer to the problems of the

future in matters that transcend the reach of the human mind. Such was Rajaji, the disciple of Mahatma Gandhi, the doyen among India's fighters for freedom, the dauntless champion of the down-trodden millions of the land !

## CHAPTER ONE

# The Coming Man

*The child is the father of the man*

—Wordsworth

IT is doubtful if the biographies of great men down the centuries delineate them as fully and fascinatingly as their own pen-pictures would reveal to the world the varied and wondrous gifts of their remarkable personalities. What a rich panorama of life and thought would we have had of ancient Greece if Socrates had also written his autobiography besides bequeathing a bountiful harvest of his wisdom to the youth of Athens and all mankind down the ages that still arouses our admiration and awe! What a picture Shakespeare would have painted of "the spacious times of great Elizabeth" if he had also written about himself and his contemporaries besides his incomparable gift of plays and poems to the world's literature! Autobiography is the true assessment of a man's soul in his moments of trial and triumph. There have been, no doubt, some great autobiographies that have enriched the world's literature but who can withhold a pang of poignant regret at the absence of an autobiography from the pen of Rajaji?

Temperamentally, Rajaji was averse to writing an autobiography. It was as much due to his innate humility as to his being profoundly conscious of his insignificance before His Maker. A man of encyclopaedic mind, the effort was not beyond his ability while much lesser men with little to their credit in

terms of real achievement have projected themselves into the public gaze. Still we get glimpses of Rajaji in rare moments when he refers in his writings or speeches to the incidents in his past life that makes one feel again and again the absence of an autobiography from him that would have been on a par with that of Mahatma Gandhi's incomparable classic, *The Story Of My Experiments With Truth*.

"I don't like autobiographies," he declares emphatically, "one cannot help trying to show oneself in a good light. And self-adulation is disgusting. Even biographies which are written by admirers are much too reverential generally in tone. Of course, with a biography of a really great man—such as Abraham Lincoln—one can discount the adulation and get a fair picture. Usually, one can't. No; biographies and autobiographies ought not to be written."<sup>1</sup> Hence we have to be satisfied with such stray reference, here and there in his works, wherein he forgets his dislike for writing about himself and lays bare the innermost recesses of his soul. Rajaji was so much in the public gaze for over half a century that despite his modesty, we can not only reconstruct the man and his mind but also probe into his heart!

A precocious lad from his childhood, Rajaji exhibited signs of his extraordinary intellectual gifts even as a boy. An incident is narrated of an Inspector of Schools visiting his school and asking him the question, which would have embarrassed most grown-ups: "What is the colour of God?" Pat came the reply from this remarkable pupil while his master was amazed at his answer, "Blue!"

"Why do you say the colour of God is blue?"

"Because," continued the little boy unperturbed, "the sky is blue, the ocean is blue, many things in this world are bluish in colour!" What wonder if Rajaji passed his Matriculation examination when he was only twelve!

His father, Chakravarti Iyengar, a scholar in Sanskrit but by no standards a rich man, recognised the remarkable talents of his son even before his teens and enabled him to reap the benefits of a college education. Rajaji joined the Central College, Bangalore where occurred one of the most important events in his life, namely his meeting with another youth of about the

same age, Navaratna Rama Rao. The two felt drawn towards each other, mutually admiring their gifts of mind. They soon developed a great affection for each other, which ripened into a rare saga of friendship that lasted all their lives, sundered only by the cruel hand of death.

Rajaji was seventeen years old when he entered the Law College in Madras. After he had enrolled himself as a lawyer he rose quickly in the profession. He showed signs of his keen and sharp intellect for at twenty-one he had defended his first murderer! He built up a good criminal practice at Salem, where the doyen of the bar was C. Vijayaraghava Chariar. He was one of the founders of the Indian National Congress in 1885 and presided at its session in 1920, which authorised Mahatma Gandhi to start the Non-Cooperation Movement for the attainment of freedom for India from British subjection. "There was no one more courageous or better informed politically than my political and lawyer *guru*, Vijayaraghava Chariar, in the galaxy of political leaders in India. I learnt from him on the day I entered the Salem bar in 1900 that the function of lawyers was not merely to conduct their clients' cases but also to watch the interests of the nation which was under foreign rule."<sup>2</sup>

He soon rose to the top of his profession at Salem. A happy home, a loving wife whom he loved deeply, children who were the cynosure of their parents' eyes—what more could a man want? His placid and prosperous life was not, however, to continue long. His partner in life fell ill after bearing him half a dozen children and was nursed by Rajaji with all the care and affection of a doting husband. The memories of the happy times he spent with her in his early manhood often recurred to him even after he had bidden goodbye to the bar at the call of Mahatma Gandhi to fight for the country's emancipation. During his first imprisonment from 1921 to 1922, he looked back with nostalgic feelings at the never-to-be-forgotten days of joy that he shared with his beloved wife and children. Their absence intensified his yearning for them making him feel lonely and sad, although his fellow satyagrahis in prison showered on him any amount of sincere affection and looked after him with

great care and solicitude. He kept a diary in jail from which we get glimpses into the innermost workings of his heart, worthy of one who was as great in his love for his family and fireside as he was of his fellowmen outside the prison. "I was pushing away from my mind, as trespassers, the thoughts that came up each time that the familiar whistling of the railway train passing by came across the prison bars. But, today, as I was at my evening prayer, the sweet music of the village *Nagaswaram*, that came from some happy home in the hamlets lying outside the prison wall, brought with it such an irresistible rush of happy recollections that I could not for long get them out. The music of these pipes is to me, and I suppose to every man and woman in this land, a sound that brings on its back a world of sweet recollections, a *vahana* of happy youth, of joy and hope. As I let myself wander for a moment in this dream-world, I could not resist my tears. Yet God has not spared of His good things for me. Love immeasurable has been my share from my wife, family, friends and all, but who can feel satisfied and say it is enough? These thoughts render me weak. All my strength is needed for battle, and I cannot afford to let my mind wander thus into the garden of sweet flowers that yield only tears. All that I shall say to my God is, if she is anywhere and is still subject to pain and pleasure, keep her happy and free from pain and sadness and give me strength to endure and to perform my duties."<sup>3</sup>

The coming of the non-cooperation movement found him responding to the call of Mahatma Gandhi for snapping the bonds of subjection to the British. After a quarter century of struggle against the Boers and the British in South Africa, where he gained a large measure of success with his matchless weapon of *satyagraha*, Gandhi discovered his own spiritual strength that proved invincible against bullets and bombs. Having achieved his purpose in a foreign land, he turned his steps homeward, conscious of the necessity for freeing his own people from alien domination. But he was in no hurry to plunge into Indian politics straightaway. He took time to study prevailing conditions, to gather impressions of men and things by travelling across the length and breadth of the land, to seek

3 Rajaji's *Jail Diary*, 19 January 1922.

the advice of older leaders dedicated to the country's service. In this manner Mahatma Gandhi prepared himself to launch a movement for India's liberation. His plan of action was different from what had been followed by his predecessors. He attacked the very citadels of autocracy and the bastions of British imperialism, propped up by the power and prestige of a people whose proud boast was that the sun never set on their Empire! In his mind's eye he envisaged the day when the hegemony of Britain on its Eastern dependency would be humbled by their voluntary withdrawal from the scene of their splendour and glory. Towards that end Mahatma Gandhi step by step rang down the curtain on the stage of British supremacy and by slow, deliberate action, divinely guided by the hand of destiny, he made the sun set on the British Empire by the unconquerable power of his soul! He seemed to work a miracle on the minds of the mighty rulers of India and they ultimately declared after a titanic struggle with their subjects, that they would "quit India", as if in response to the resolution passed by the Congress Working Committee on 9 August 1942! Mahatma Gandhi himself was a "miracle of God", as Rajaji has mentioned, and this "miracle-worker" showed the indomitable strength of his spirit against brute force. The conquerors of the world have left behind a memory of their prowess and have been swallowed up in oblivion but Gandhiji has left a light that will illumine the world for ages to come. Rajaji was one of his principal lieutenants, perhaps, the ablest and most astute in the fight for India's liberty that Gandhiji led so successfully.

## CHAPTER TWO

# The Impact of Mahatma Gandhi

*Gandhiji said he had never met anyone with such a profound knowledge of the principles of satyagraha; and it was a dream that Gandhiji had in Rajaji's house one night that sparked off the first act of civil disobedience in India.*

“I Meet Rajaji”

THE coming of Mahatma Gandhi on the Indian political scene was a revelation not only to the rulers of India then but also to the millions over whom they held sway. He brought a glimpse of hope to the hapless masses sunk in poverty, content with their miserable conditions of life, dragging on their existence from day to day in darkness and despair, with no hope of the dawn. Jawaharlal Nehru describes with a realistic touch the prevailing state of affairs:

And then Gandhi came. He was like a powerful current of fresh air that made us stretch ourselves and take deep breaths, like a beam of light that pierced the darkness and removed the scales from our eyes, like a whirlwind that upset many things but most of all the workings of people's minds . . . The essence of his teaching was fearlessness and truth and action allied to these, always keeping the welfare of the masses in view. The greatest gift for an individual or a nation, so we had been told in our ancient books, was *abhaya*,



fearlessness, not merely bodily courage but the absence of fear from the mind. The dominant impulse in India under British rule was that of fear, pervasive, oppressing, strangling fear . . . It was against this all-pervading fear that Gandhi's quiet and determined voice was raised . Be not afraid <sup>1</sup>

Rajaji had risen in Salem from a humble lawyer to the heights of his profession. At the suggestion of friends like Kasturi Ranga Iyengar, who was then editor of *The Hindu*, he had migrated to Madras to practise in that metropolitan city, famous for its brilliant galaxy of lawyers and brilliant juniors at the bar. Apart from finding a bigger field for his talents at Madras, Rajaji's intention was to take more interest in public life and actively associate himself with politics. Gandhi's first contact with Rajaji is best described in his own words :

Mahadev Desai very soon formed acquaintance with Rajagopalachari who, from his innate shyness, kept himself constantly in the background. But Mahadev put me on my guard. 'You should cultivate this man,' he said to me one day. And so I did. We daily discussed plans of the fight together, but beyond the holding of public meetings I could not then think of any other programme <sup>2</sup>

Gandhi had then come to Madras to consult local leaders about his idea of starting civil disobedience against the Rowlatt Bill if it was passed into law. Kasturi Ranga Iyengar convened a meeting of Congress stalwarts which included C. Vijayaraghavachariar. While they were discussing the matter Gandhi felt he could not solve the problem and confessed to Vijayaraghavachariar that it was beyond his capacity. Meanwhile the Rowlatt Act had become law. "While these cogitations were still going on," continues Gandhi, "news was received that the Rowlatt Bill had been published as an Act. That night I fell asleep while thinking over the question. Towards the small hours of the morning I woke up somewhat earlier than usual.

1. *The Discovery of India*, p. 427.

2. *The Story Of My Experiments with Truth*, Vol II, p. 484.

I was still in that twilight condition between sleep and consciousness when suddenly the idea broke upon me—it was as if in a dream. Early in the morning I related the whole story to Rajagopalachari. ‘The idea came to me last night in a dream that we should call upon the country to observe a general *hartal*. Satyagraha is a process of self-purification, and ours is a sacred fight and it seems to me to be in the fitness of things that it should be commenced with an act of self-purification. Let all the people of India, therefore, suspend their business on that day, and observe the day as one of fasting and prayer. The Mussulmans may not fast for more than one day; so the duration of the fast should be 24 hours. It is very difficult to say whether all the provinces would respond to this appeal of ours or not but I feel fairly certain of Bombay, Madras, Bihar and Sindh. I think we should have every reason to feel satisfied even if all these places observe the *hartal* fittingly’ Rajagopalachari was at once taken up with my suggestion.”<sup>3</sup>

It will be seen that some mysterious force so drew Gandhiji and Rajaji to each other at their very first meeting that the Master takes the follower into his confidence and reveals to him what passed in his mind during a vision! This strange coming together of these two remarkable persons augured well for the future of the country. Thereafter Rajaji became a most devoted disciple of the Mahatma, recognising in him one who had been charged with a divine mission to lead India to the threshold of freedom. This first instance of Gandhiji’s confidence in him had a psychological effect on Rajaji’s mind. From that day he became a most valued colleague and co-worker of the Father of the Nation, who sought his counsel whenever he was in doubt about the correctness of the path he was taking. At the same time Rajaji realised that Gandhiji was a leader far out of the ordinary, gifted with a vision that baffled the most experienced among them, destined to lead the country from subjection to freedom. He did not become a blind follower carried away by the charisma of his personality but he considered the pros and cons of a question and gave his loyal support to Gandhiji only when convinced of its correctness.

Rajaji considered that Gandhiji’s worship of truth and

non-violence were not mere truth of words and abstinence from the taking of life. He wanted people to adopt these two great principles of good conduct in their day-to-day life. Rajaji fully appreciated the meaning of *ahimsa* as expounded by Gandhiji who declared: "*Ahimsa* is not for saints only but for all ordinary men in their own life pursuing their common objects in the world." But the strict adherence to Truth and Non-violence of Gandhiji's concept is no easy matter. for it calls for a heroic faith in God and an indomitable belief that God will be by us in our adoption and practice of these two great ideals. "Truth waited like a vigilant spy on Gandhiji and his inner voice always spoke to him in sure though soft tones. Gandhiji lived and worked on no man's sufferance. He suffered the world but he himself was free, entirely free. Of no one else, I say with great regard, can this be said"<sup>4</sup> Gandhiji's faith in *ahimsa* was attacked by his carping critics when he directed that the life of a calf at the Sabarmati Asram, which was in mortal agony, should be put an end to, in order to relieve its suffering. "The Apostle of *Ahimsa*," they cried in one voice, "to let a calf be killed!" Gandhiji asked them not to convert non-violence into idolatry for it would degenerate into violence if blindly followed without reference to time and circumstances. So Rajaji soon became a votary of truth and non-violence and whole-heartedly approved of Gandhiji's plan of non-cooperation for winning *Swaraj* for India. Gandhiji never promised his followers any prizes if they followed him in thought and action, except the inestimable prize of independence for India. For a nation to obtain a non-violent victory against the mightiest empire the world has known, patience and faith were absolutely necessary, even as their shield and buckler were their unconquerable faith in God and His Grace.

Gandhiji was a politician, no doubt, in his quest for India's *Swaraj* but he had a spiritual mission basing all his work in the Supreme. For had he not declared long ago that he had entered politics in order to spiritualize it? This spiritual basis of Gandhiji's movement for India's freedom attracted Rajaji and made him one of his most trusted and true lieutenants, loyal to the core, living in the shadow of the leader ever afterwards,

4. *Swarajya*, 2 May 1964.

fulfilling his ideals in his own life as no other colleague or co-worker of the Mahatma did. Rajaji's reverence for Gandhiji and his rare life of service and sacrifice in the cause of the country grew with the passing of the years and exalted him in Rajaji's estimation to the extent of looking upon him as the *Matsya Avatar* of our age. Many were the splendid tributes paid to Gandhiji during his Centenary Year of 1969 by eminent personalities of the East and the West. Rajaji joined them in offering his garland of flowers to the memory of the Mahatma:

Others have thought, I myself have thought, the things that Gandhiji thought, sometimes even before he put them down for others to read. But the power that enabled him to do what he thought fit came from Above. So it is I consider him one who held a commission from God, an Avatar. The politics of India may go its own way. Gandhiji now belongs more to the world than to India <sup>5</sup>

Gandhiji's achievement was not merely freeing his people and his country from foreign bondage. The hero of humanity that he was, his ambition was to bring about harmony between the nations of the world, especially after seeing the horrors of Hiroshima and the holocaust of two world wars. Gandhiji aimed at the realisation of "One World," the dream of Wendell Willkie, and the building up of a World Government. Rajaji was aware of this aspect of his Master's efforts and endeavours for world peace and followed in his footsteps. Just as Gandhiji's concept of truth and non-violence coloured all the thoughts and actions of Rajaji, this inspiration for working for world peace had its source in Rajaji's adherence to and adoption of his Master's ideals. Rajaji not only drilled into the ears of the statesmen of the Big Powers to follow nuclear disarmament and give up their lust for dominating the earth on the strength of their stock-pile of nuclear arms, he also actively preached the doctrine of unilateral action in order to achieve the noble objective of world peace. To put his ideas into practical shape Rajaji led a World Peace Mission, under the auspices of the Gandhiji Peace Foundation, to the United States

5. *Swarajya*, 4 October 1969.

and interviewed President Kennedy and the leading statesmen and thinkers of America. His mission was not without visible results in the minds of the American people for President Kennedy after the interview declared that Rajaji had a "civilising influence" on him! The worshippers of power admitted the futility of force and the supremacy of spiritual strength when propounded by this sincere and true follower of Gandhiji. "Gandhiji was not what is usually denoted by the word 'pacifist,' although the pacifists of the world were attracted to and hung round him because of his illustrious career and success with non-violence. He had his own definitions in all matters. He believed in truth and non-violence but he believed equally in resisting evil, in which he included international ambitions. He was not a non-resister but he loathed shedding the blood of anyone in his resistance except his own. He therefore called himself a non-violent resister, not a pacifist. If we believe in national frontiers and in guarding them, we should not talk the language or think in terms of pacifism but refer rather to the Gandhian dictum. We know what Gandhiji wanted people to do, if they were not ready for sacrifice involved in non-violent resistance. He permitted armed resistance in good causes when there was no reasonable chance of offering non-violent resistance. And armed resistance includes not merely offering force in desperate isolation but obtaining the support and co-operation of helpful friends."<sup>6</sup>

It did not take long for Rajaji to realise the spiritual eminence of the Mahatma, though the latter moved and worked with ordinary men and women from day to day, whether in the field of political action or for securing equality for the under-dog in society or justice for labour against capital's denial of it. Rajaji considers that Gandhiji raised India to a position of high dignity among the nations because of his moral stature and his insistence on the ideals that form the fine core and foundation of Indian culture. This aspect of the Mahatma's influence on Indian life and thought is reiterated by Rajaji when he saw a sad decline in the character of the people and their rulers after independence. What did Gandhiji want of us, he asks, and answers the question. "Gandhiji desired that

we should lead industrious lives and banish laziness from the land. He wanted us to lead simple lives and treat all our possessions as a trust held for those around us, which is the only non-violent means to banish the disparities of wealth. He wanted everyone of us to banish avarice, hatred and envy out of our hearts and keep it clean to enthrone God in it. This he said, is the best means to happiness and the most effective form of true patriotism." Rajaji, in consonance with his following the fine ideals of his Master, appealed to the people of India, especially the elite, to live in such a way as to bring back the moral grandeur that Gandhiji gave us in our days of struggle for *Swaraj* and restore India to her proud position of honour that the nations of the world accorded her during his lifetime.

It was the spiritual calibre of Mahatma Gandhi, more than anything else, that made an unforgettable mark on Rajaji's mind. A man who relied on reason and logic to the last degree, Rajaji often battled against the "inner voice of the Mahatma," whose avowed attachment to truth often triumphed over the intellectual powers of his protege. When he differed on a point with him, Rajaji would not easily allow himself to be convinced or conquered by the sheer weight of Gandhiji's moral ascendancy. He would argue with Gandhiji till the last and only when he felt floored by the faith of his Master, who declared that "Faith transcends reason," Rajaji would allow his conscience to accept the opposite view. Otherwise he would agree to differ and maintain his point, though most devoted to his leader in a most personal way. This was exemplified on a number of occasions but the most notable instance of such divergence of views between leader and lieutenant was over the question of Pakistan. Rajaji was in favour of making such a concession in principle to Mr. Mohamed Ali Jinnah, the Muslim leader, in order to make him give up the idea of demanding a separate State for the Muslims. When his opinion found no support from Gandhiji, there was no alternative for Rajaji but to leave the Congress and for a time to go into the political wilderness. He stuck to his guns alone, undaunted by criticism from colleagues in the Congress. But his vision and wisdom proved true in the end when Britain divided India into two separate States enjoying independence after 15 August 1947.

Jawaharlal Nehru always had deep admiration for the independence of thought and individuality of action of Rajaji. As long ago as 27 January 1928 he recognised the integrity and personal excellence of Rajaji in a letter addressed to him:

Though I was beginning to detect some differences in viewpoint between you and me, I had no notion whatever of the terrible extent of these differences. The differences between you and me appear to be so vast and radical that there seems to be no meeting ground between us. I can't conceal from you my grief that I should lose a comrade so valiant, so faithful, so able and so honest as you are and have always been, but in serving a cause, comradeship—if dissolution must come—in no way affects our personal intimacy. We have long been members of one family and we remain as such in spite of grave political differences.<sup>7</sup>

While they were the most loyal of comrades in the fight for India's freedom, both owing unalloyed and unsurpassed allegiance to their leader, the gap between Rajaji and Jawaharlal Nehru grew after Rajaji left the Central Cabinet and confined himself to the more glorious role of an elder statesman of the nation. He took upon himself the duty of admonishing the government and people for betraying Mahatma Gandhi's ideals and straying from the path of probity in the administration. Before he assumed this unenviable role Rajaji had been chosen to succeed Lord Mountbatten as the Governor-General of India. His selection was acclaimed by all the political parties in India as well as in Great Britain. Jawaharlal Nehru then heaped unqualified praise on his assumption of the high office. Unveiling his portrait in the Madras Legislative Assembly on 24 June 1948, he also referred to his undisguised divergences of opinion from Gandhiji.

Rajaji is a person of strong convictions and strong beliefs who has adhered to them. You know he was very much influenced in the early years by Mahatma Gandhi. He accepted basically the approach of Mahatmaji to various problems.

Nevertheless, at no time did he become a person who unthinkingly accepted any one's dictum, not even Mahatmaji's. Rajaji would argue with Mahatmaji, debate with him and would not give in easily. Ultimately, however, he gave in because he thought it best under the circumstances to accept Mahatmaji's judgement. Rajaji's faith in Mahatmaji was tremendous but he never allowed his mind to slip away. Whatever happened he came to his own conclusion. But if he did give in to somebody, he did so consciously and deliberately, after arguing the matter. Therefore Rajaji, whether he sometimes disagreed with us or very often agreed with us, brought an extraordinarily keen and analytical mind to bear on every question, that came before us. Whether he agreed or disagreed with us he would like every question to be discussed thoroughly. So we honour tremendously a man like Mahatma Gandhi for what I call the opposite of possessions, titles etc. Likewise we honour Rajaji for his spirit of individuality, service and sacrifice. Rajaji represents fundamentally the highest type of the mind of India<sup>8</sup>

From the time he began to know Gandhiji and became his devoted follower, Rajaji was struck by his Master's unswerving adherence to the principles he avowed and actively practised whether in the political field or in his private life. Gandhiji's basic philosophy was that every man is intrinsically good and reasonable and if he is properly approached, he will turn from the path of error to one of rectitude. Gandhiji therefore offered the method of *satyagraha* or self-suffering in order to convert an opponent to one's own views, thus eschewing violence to achieve that end. "Gandhiji did not accept that only good men will yield to self-suffering, not bad type of men, and that satyagraha was not good against the latter. Gandhiji believed in the Hindu Scripture. "*Isvaras Sarvabhootanam Hrididesha Thishtathi* : 'The Lord dwells in every one's heart.' The assumption that every human being is basically good and that we can and should appeal to that element in him stems from the Hindu philosophy of *Vedanta* "<sup>9</sup>

8 *Swarajya*, 11 November 1967.

9 *Bhavan's Journal*, 4 July 1965.



The personal interest that Gandhiji evinced in his immediate colleagues and co-workers struck Rajaji as marking out the Mahatma as being different from most of the political leaders of the land. Once his activities were restrained by Government throwing him into jail, Gandhiji confined himself to his own thoughts and communing with his Maker. It was because of this spiritual back-ground of his whole life that he could boldly declare that every moment of his life was guided by God. Even in his letters from prison Gandhiji was scrupulously non-political, more interested in the private and personal affairs of his lieutenants, curious to know how they were facing rigours of jail life. Rajaji mentions one letter he received from Gandhiji in Bardoli dated 3rd February 1922.<sup>10</sup>

I was glad and thankful to get your note. You certainly miss nothing by not having newspapers And I do envy your spinning wheel and *Ramayana* . You must not lose flesh. I thought, in your company, I was the lowest in weight but you beat me fully by 10 lbs now. I hope you are allowed plenty of milk Let me prescribe for you. If you can get milk and plenty of sweet juicy fruit, oranges or grapes, you will get rid of your asthma and gain in weight. Devdas is in Allahabad. Kristodas and Ramdas look after me. You are not the only one to enjoy your solitude Sundaram is just now in the Ashram undergoing a vow of silence He has read too much and thought too little. His silence may do him good.

Yours sincerely,  
M.K. Gandhi

Rajaji was struck by the extraordinary humanism of Mahatma Gandhi and imbibed a great bit of it himself. During his many tours throughout the length and breadth of India, Gandhiji realised how deep was the poverty under which the masses were sunk, how miserable was their existence and how they were at the mercy of landlords and moneylenders whose grip over them seemed to be unbreakable. Gandhiji was horrified at the

10. Rajaji's *Jail Diary* (1921-22).

sight of the skeletons that had greeted him in the famine-stricken areas of the land. His soul rebelled at the existence of the institution of untouchability in Hinduism, which he considered a parasite on its grand and glorious philosophy. On a memorable occasion he had declared that "Untouchability is like a blot on the fair name of Hindu religion." He determined to remove untouchability root and branch, which was one of the main items in his programme for the regeneration of India. He undertook an all-India tour for getting shrines and temples thrown open for worship to the untouchables, whom he christened *Harijans* or the children of God.

Rajaji was so inspired by Gandhiji's gospel of equality for all classes of Hindus that he accompanied Mahatmaji on his long pilgrimage to rid the holy places of Hinduism of their perverse idea that the entry of untouchables would pollute the deity in the shrines. "You must have a poor opinion of God," asserted Gandhiji, "if you think that the entry of Harijans into temples will pollute them instead of God purifying them and the other Hindus of the four castes." Gandhiji made up his mind not to step into any temples that denied access to Harijans for worship therein like other Hindus. The agony rankled in his soul so deeply and he identified himself so much with the cause of the Harijans that he once said with undisguised emotion, "I wish I am born an untouchable in my next birth!" Not only did Gandhiji devote his energies and enthusiasm for the banishment of untouchability from the Hindu fold, he often lived among them. Rajaji in his own way and in his own time played no mean part in his Master's endeavours to see that justice was done to the lowest in Hindu society.

The semi-nakedness of Mahatma Gandhi's body revealed to the world the spiritual grandeur of his soul before which kings and commanders quailed and which evoked the spontaneous reverence of man all over the world, from East to West, equalling the homage paid to the noblest saints in history. Rajaji again and again refers to this sublime aspect of his Master's life, whom he deemed an *Avatar* come down into the world to conquer the hosts of evil by his selfless service to mankind and supreme sacrifice for the causes dear to his soul. In Rajaji's opinion Mahatma Gandhi was a miracle wrought by God even as Socrates and Buddha and Jesus Christ were miracles come

out of His Immortal Mind ' Gandhiji's views are good for all time since they are the echoes of the Everlasting and Eternal Spirit. Rajaji quotes from Robert Payne's book on Mahatma Gandhi published during the Centenary Year, a passage that portrays in ineffable language the lofty place that Gandhiji holds among the heroes of humanity

In some strange and mysterious way, the plain white loin-cloth and shawl of a Hindu peasant looked like the robes of an Emperor on Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi. It was the man himself, of course, who made this so, but who but an Emperor or a saint could conquer the heart of a country and become its conscience? It was the example of his life and his belief in non-violence, the new dignity he gave to the villagers, the simple assertion of human rights. He fought for elemental things, for truth and justice above all, and he was able to give weight and meaning to these words, which were otherwise weightless and meaningless. Future historians will probably regard him as one of those rare men who come at the end of historical epochs and by their very presence announce the beginning of a new dispensation, though they are not themselves permitted to see the promised land. He was one with Buddha and the ancient sages.<sup>11</sup>

11. *The Life and Death of Mahatma Gandhi* . by Robert Payne.

### CHAPTER THREE

## The Freedom Fighter

*The cause of freedom is the cause of God*

—Samuel Bowles

RAJAJI's place in the fight for India's freedom has passed into history. We have seen how he became a great confident of Mahatma Gandhi from the time he came into contact with him. There was in his make-up those rare qualities that evoked trust from his leader. No doubt he did not give the Mahatma his blind loyalty but his fidelity was all the more invaluable in that it came from the innermost centre of his being after it had passed through severe tests in the laboratory of his questioning soul. Politics did not mean to him a pastime for his idle moments as many leaders considered it in the pre-Gandhian era. Nor was it a means of feathering one's own nest when power came into their hands after freedom. Though he did not set out as his Master did, "to spiritualize politics" in India, Rajaji threw himself heart and soul into the fray once he felt that he must do his duty towards his countrymen in their quest for liberty. More and more he realized the greatness of Gandhiji and the glory of his twin ideals of truth and non-violence, which he adopted in his attack on the bastions of British authority at the height of its hegemony all over the world. A man whose powers of reasoning was as sharp as a razor's edge, Rajaji gave up everything to follow his Master's

dream of realizing *Rama Rajya* and proved the truth of Gandhiji's words "Faith transcends reason" He became the living symbol and embodiment of the Gandhian way of life, interpreting the Master's message to his people who had betrayed the leader that had brought the Light of Liberty into their lives.

It is not necessary to unravel the intricacies of Indian politics during the dark hour before the dawn. The Indian National Congress and its leaders had reached a stage in their struggle against their alien rulers that called for a dominant personality to fuse its various factions and convert them into one consummate bond of unity and strength with the common objective of throwing off the foreigner's yoke. As against its policy the Liberals had many gifted men to speak with one voice for constitutional action that ruled out a revolt against their rulers. The third group of persons, who added to the divided counsels of the nationalists, was the large and powerful minority of Muslims under a masterful leader whose aim seemed to be to stem the tide of the country's progress towards emancipation because his co-religionists could not keep pace with the steps of the majority. When India was thus at the crossroads of her destiny, there came on the scene a man who had proved his mettle against the might of the Boers and the British for over two decades in a far-off land and emerged as a valiant and victorious leader whose unique methods of political warfare had won him renown even from his opponents. From the day that Mahatma Gandhi whispered the *mantra* of *Swaraj* into the ears of millions of his countrymen, he became India's Man of Destiny inspired by a divine mission to lead India to the threshold of freedom having as his lieutenants men like Rajagopalachari and Rajendra Prasad, Motilal Nehru and Jawaharlal Nehru, Chittaranjan Das and Subhash Chandra Bose, Vallabhbhai Patel and Tanguturi Prakasam, Sarojini Naidu and Lala Lajpat Rai.

Perhaps there was no contemporary or colleague of Mahatma Gandhi who understood his philosophy of life and its variegated pattern better than Rajaji. It is also most remarkable that Rajaji never wrote at length on the career of his Master or his many achievements in his multitudinous fields of action. There are here and there radiant

glimpses of Gandhiji's greatness scattered in his writings. But one does not find a compact or complete assessment of the Mahatma even as there is no autobiography of Rajaji. It was not that he could not essay an estimate of Gandhiji worthy of his eminence; rather, Rajaji does not seem to have felt sure that his portrait would come up to his own opinion of the Mahatma or fully reveal the many-splendoured facets of his fascinating personality. Again and again he refers to the magnificent triumph of the Mahatma in leading India to her freedom adopting his twin weapons of Truth and Non-violence. He also mentions often how Gandhiji raised India in the esteem of world nations by his consistent practice of the ancient doctrines *dharma* and *satya*, which became the cornerstones of Rajaji's own philosophy of life. Like many who became devoted admirers of the Mahatma but could not in so many words describe the depth of their feelings, Rajaji ultimately calls him an *Avatar* !

Rajaji understood the implication of *satyagraha* and the effects of its implementation in the political field. Though Rajaji was in jail for one year in the early stages of the fight for emancipation, his *Jail Diary* records his remarkable assimilation of Gandhiji's message to the people of India. He is at times cut up at the poor idea of the common folks who offered to go to jail but once in it, thought it would be an enjoyable holiday. "We do great injury to the movement and impede its progress by doing anything which will make the world imagine that prison-life is hard. We have gone in for a great cause on which we should concentrate our thoughts and efforts, and not fritter them away in reform of jail administration and purification of jail officials. By our struggling over these matters we divert the attention of the general public also into the minor channels during a critical period in the movement. Again we give satisfaction to those who treat us cruelly by exhibiting symptoms of pain. How many hundreds of common prisoners patiently bear the same treatment that is accorded to us, if not worse ! May we, who claim to be better than these prisoners, show comparative weakness ? Rather we should prove we have greater strength to bear."<sup>1</sup>

1. Rajaji's *Jail Diary* (1921-22)

The struggle for *Swaraj* did not proceed smoothly nor was it attended with quick success according to Gandhiji's fond surmise. Violence broke out at a number of places all over the country, compelling the Mahatma to call off the movement and embarking on more than one fast in order to expiate for the sins of his followers. But on the whole the people behaved with exemplary patience and forbearance in spite of the ruthless repression indulged in by the rulers. They went to jail in their hundreds of thousands—men and women, the young and the old, the rich and the poor. This aspect of the struggle gladdened Gandhiji's heart; he did not throw up his hands in despair because success had not crowned his efforts even after a decade of his starting the movement. More than its effect on the masses of India and awakening them to their abject condition under alien subjection, its impact on the common men and the intellectuals of Europe and America was profound. Dozens of books were written about the "naked fakir" who had become the beacon for India's benighted millions, promising to lead them to hope and joy, happiness and plenty, once the Britisher was driven out of the land. One of the most famous writers and intellectuals of Europe, Romain Rolland, wrote a great book about Gandhiji. He interpreted the Mahatma to Western readers revealing the spiritual strength that lay behind his words and actions and he applauded the unique weapon of *satyagraha* which Gandhiji wielded for winning India's freedom. Romain Rolland in the course of a letter to a friend in England observed :

In the eyes of thousands of men today, who consider the maintenance of the present form of society—imperialist and capitalist—intolerable, and who are determined to change it, the magnificent experiment in India of *satyagraha* is the only chance offered to the world of bringing about this social transformation without appeal to violence. If it fails, if it is ruined by the violence of the British Empire pitting itself against India's Civil Disobedience—there will be no other issue for human evolution but violence; and it will be the British Empire itself which has decided it—it is either Gandhi or Lenin. In any case social justice will be done. It is this which makes the spectacle of India so much the

more tragic. This is why all who have at heart the harmony of society and the spirit of peace and the Gospel, must give their help, sparing no effort, to India. For if the India of satyagraha were to go down in the battle, it is Christ himself who would be pierced by it, with a supreme lance-thrust on the Cross. And this time there would be no resurrection.<sup>2</sup>

Rajaji played a notable part in bringing about the *Yeravada pact* under which untouchables could participate on terms of equality with Hindus of other castes in political, social and religious matters. As a result of the deliberations of the Second Round Table Conference in London towards the end of 1932, the British Premier Mr. Ramsay MacDonald gave his Award granting separate electorates to untouchables. This went against the letter and spirit of Mahatma Gandhi's campaign for equality to them on a par with Hindus. Gandhi felt the injustice done to them and the incongruity of his position as their champion. As a protest he went on a fast for three weeks to see that the Award was revised and justice done according to his own objective. This drastic step made the leaders of India sit up and devise means to save the life of the Mahatma, who considered the Award a stab in the back.

Before the British Prime Minister's Award there had been country-wide repression. Gandhi and other prominent Congress leaders had been arrested along with 80,000 men and women in four months of unbridled repression. From his prison in Yeravda, Gandhi wrote to Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India, "You will perhaps recollect that at the end of my speech at the Round Table Conference when the minorities' claim was presented, I had said that I should resist with my life the grant of separate electorates to the Depressed Classes. From the papers I am permitted to read, I observe that at any moment H M's Government may declare their decision. I need hardly reiterate all the objections of separate electorates to the Depressed Classes. For me the question of these classes is predominantly moral and religious.

2. Quoted in *Mahatma*, D G Tendulkar, Vol 3, p. 158.



The political aspect, though important, dwindles into insignificance compared to the moral and religious issue. You will have to appreciate my deep feelings in this matter by remembering that I had been interested in the condition of these classes from my boyhood and have more than once staked my all for their sake. I say this not to pride myself in any way. For, I feel that no penance that the Hindus may do, can in any way compensate for the calculated degradation to which they have consigned the Depressed Classes for centuries. But I know that the Separate Electorate is neither a penance nor a remedy for the crushing degradation they have groaned under. Therefore, I respectfully inform H M.'s Government that in the event of their decision creating separate electorates for the Depressed Classes, I must fast unto death."<sup>3</sup>

The Award of Mr Ramsay MacDonald proved the truth of Gandhiji's premonitions. So he wrote a letter to the British Premier informing him of his decision to resort to a "perpetual fast unto death." He felt as a man of religion that he had no alternative and concluded his epistle with these memorable words: "It may be that my judgment is warped and I am wholly in error in regarding separate electorates for the Depressed Classes as harmful to them or to Hinduism. If so, I am not likely to be in the right in reference to other parts of my philosophy of life. In that case, my death by fasting will be at once a penance for my error and a lifting of a weight off the numberless men and women who have childlike faith in my wisdom whereas, if my judgment is right, as I have little doubt it is, the contemplated step is but due to the fulfilment of the scheme of life which I have tried for more than a quarter of a century apparently not without considerable success."<sup>4</sup>

Gandhiji's correspondence with the authorities in Great Britain and India before embarking on his "ordeal of fire" confirms his faith in God and reveals to the world what a fighter for justice and equality he was to the lowliest on a par with the high and holy ones in the Hindu fold. He was ever a fighter for the freedom of his people, for the removal of disparities between man and man, for doing away with the

3 *Mahatma*, D G. Tendulkar, Vol 3, pp 159-60.

4. *Ibid*, p 162.

tyranny of wealth over the hapless ones of society in India. But his espousal of the cause of the untouchables places him on a par with the saints and sages of humanity.

Gandhiji had resolved that the agony of ages through which the untouchables had passed would end for ever, with the sacrifice of his life as an expiation for the wrongs that his Hindu brethren had perpetrated for centuries in the name of religion. That would rid Hinduism of what he deemed to be the blackest blot on its fair name and its famous philosophy of tolerance. Gandhiji decided to enter the "Ordeal of Fire"; he was destined to come out of it, pure and scathless, destined to do greater service to his people in the years to come, destined to die a martyr for Hindu-Muslim unity.

The Civil Disobedience Movement, started earlier in 1930, continued until 1934. The deliberations of the Second Round Table Conference resulted in the enactment of the Government of India Act, 1935 by the British Parliament. A large number of Congress leaders felt that they should contest the elections to be held under the above Act thereafter. Rajaji was one of those in favour. With Gandhiji's blessings the Congress Party was successful in obtaining a majority in seven of the eleven provinces of India. Rajaji became the Chief Minister of Madras Province in 1937. He had now the opportunity to exhibit his passion for the service of the poor masses. He could also realise some of the dreams of his Master in starting the non-cooperation movement for *swaraj* and the resurgence of India. The first thing that Rajaji did for that purpose was to get a law enacted imposing prohibition in Madras province. The first district to which he made the Madras prohibition Act, 1937 applicable was his own home district of Salem which saw prohibition in force from 1st October, 1937. Rajaji had always agreed with Mahatma Gandhiji that the debased and demoralised condition of the poor in India was largely due to the drink evil. Once he had the power and authority to redeem them from the horrors of drink, Rajaji made use of the God-given chance to keep away the miserable masses from the vile temptation of Bacchus. This was one of the main items in the constructive programme of Mahatma Gandhiji to expedite the coming of *swaraj* and hence Rajaji put it into active

practice. He also embarked on measures to alleviate the conditions of life of the lower strata of society. But such opportunities for humanitarian service became short-lived. For with the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 the Congress Governments in the various provinces had to resign in obedience to Gandhiji's directive. Consistently with his strict adherence to the principle of non-violence, he had advised the Congress to withdraw all active support to the Government in the prosecution of the war. The first step towards this consummation was the resignation of the Congress Ministries in 1939 in the seven provinces administered by them. This abrupt end to their authority did not prevent some of the Congress Ministers from gaining enough experience in the art of government, which they utilised later when power was actually in their hands after *swaraj*. So Rajaji went back to continue the struggle for freedom. His administration as Chief Minister of Madras was highly praised for its efficiency.

After the resignation of the Congress Ministries in 1939, Gandhiji continued the freedom struggle. The government resumed its repression, the jails were filled with thousands of *satyagrahis*. Gandhiji and his lieutenants now determined to embark on the last phase of the fight, "to do or die" in the attempt to destroy the alien stranglehold. Towards this end the Congress in 1942 decided under its dynamic leader to call upon the British rulers in India to leave the country to its fate and go away even though the Axis powers were at the height of their success both in Europe and Asia. The Japanese were actually at the doors of India and had invaded its North-Eastern corner. Under such ominous conditions of danger Gandhiji got the Congress to pass a resolution on "Quit India" on 9th August 1942—the final ultimatum by its Working Committee on 9th August 1942, calling upon the British to "quit India."

This challenge to British authority induced the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow to clamp all the Congress leaders from Gandhiji downwards into jail. Even before the "Quit India" resolution was adopted by the Congress, the Mahatma had explained from time to time in the columns of his weekly, *Harijan*, what he meant by asking the British to go away from India once and for all. "I am convinced that the time has come during the

war, not after it, for the British and the Indians to be reconciled to complete separation from each other." He wrote in *Harijan* of 3 May 1942, explaining to the English people the necessity for the withdrawal of the British from India "That way and that way alone lies the safety of both, and shall I say, of the world I see with the naked eye that the estrangement is growing. Every act of the British Government is being interpreted, and I think rightly, as being in its own interest. There is no such thing as joint, common interest. To take the extreme case, a British victory over the Japanese will not mean a victory for India ..Race superiority is a drastic disease, requiring a drastic remedy. I have pointed out the remedy, complete and immediate orderly withdrawal of the British from India atleast in reality and properly from all non-European possessions It will be the bravest and cleanest act of the British people. It will at once put the Allied cause on a completely moral basis and may even lead to a most honourable peace among the warring nations I ask every Briton to support me in my appeal to the British at this very hour to retire from every Asiatic and African possession, and atleast from India. That step is essential for the safety of the world and for destruction of Nazism and Facism. This appeal is being written during my silence day. I am just now concerned with Britain's action. I ask for a bloodless end of an unnatural domination and for a new era "

Before this appeal had been made by Gandhiji for the reasons so succinctly and superbly adduced by him, Rajaji had been thinking over the question of the right of Muslims to have an independent State of their own, Pakistan The great poet, Sir Mohamed Iqbal, though a nationalist, had projected this idea into the minds of his co-religionists. The idea soon spread among the Muslim masses whose leader Mohamed Ali Jinnah propagated it with missionary zeal. All his life Gandhiji had been an apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity. He had declared on a famous occasion that the Hindus and the Muslims were like his two lungs ! Naturally he opposed the idea of the division of India into two States in order to appease the Muslims. But there were some of his lieutenants who did not wish to postpone the coming of *Swaraj* because of the intransigence of the Muslims in working for their ideal of Pakistan "On April 23, 1942 Rajagopalachari addressed a small gathering of his old

Congress supporters in the Madras legislature and carried two resolutions for submission to the All India Congress Committee, the first recommending the acceptance of Pakistan in principle as a basis of settlement between the Congress and the Muslim League and the second proposing the restoration of responsible government in Madras. The basic reason behind this move was explained by the resolution which asserted that 'to sacrifice the chances of the formation of a national government, for the doubtful advantage of maintaining a controversy over the unity of India, is the most unwise policy and that it has become necessary to choose the lesser evil'.<sup>5</sup>

Rajaji's move to placate the Muslims by conceding in principle their right to Pakistan did not meet with the approval of Gandhiji, who asserted that the difference between them both was the same as between chalk and cheese. Gandhiji observed: "Rajaji yields the right of secession now to bring unity, in the hope of keeping away the Japanese. I consider the vivisection of India to be a sin." In Gandhiji's view the voluntary withdrawal of the British from India would not by itself bring independence. It may result in Hindu-Muslim unity or, on the other hand, lead to chaos in the country. But it will enhance the moral prestige of Great Britain and also win for it the inestimable reward of the friendship of India and its people. "The fear of the Japanese occupation," said Gandhiji, "has blinded Rajagopalachari to the obvious truth. Independence sheds all fear—fear of the Japanese, fear of anarchy, fear of the British lion."<sup>6</sup> Rajaji's idea in suggesting the acceptance of Pakistan in principle was considered by Louis Fischer as eminently desirable and in the interests of both the Hindus and the Muslims. The essence of Rajaji's scheme, observed Louis Fischer, was that it gave an opportunity to the two great communities of India to work in collaboration with each other, thus discovering "the technique of peaceful co-operation." But Gandhiji declared that such united action was impossible so long as the third Power, Britain, was in India fanning the flame of communal disturbances. For the British were interested in following the policy of "divide and rule," so that they might

5. *Mahatma*, D G Tendulkar, Vol 6, p 78.

6. *Ibid.*, page 88.

perpetuate their domination of India. Gandhiji in his interview with Louis Fischer concluded that this controversy should not have arisen between him and Rajagopalachari and they had agreed to differ on this momentous question.

Rajaji did not agree with Gandhiji's suggestion that the British should withdraw from India immediately, in spite of the fact that Japan was at her doors. On the contrary, Rajaji made a positive suggestion that there should be a national government. "It is the fear of the Japanese that makes Rajagopalachari tolerate the British rule," retorted the Mahatma, "He would postpone the question of freedom until after the war. On the contrary I say that if the war is to be decidedly won, India must be free to play her part today. . . There is not the slightest room in me for accommodating the Japanese. I am sure that India's independence is not only essential for India but for China and the Allied cause . . . The whole of India's mind would be turned away from Japan. Today it is not. Chakravarti Rajagopalachari knows it. It worries him as it should worry every sane patriot. It worries me no less, but it drives me to a contrary conclusion. India lying at the feet of Great Britain may mean China lying at the feet of Japan. I can't help using this language. I feel it. You may think it startling and big. But why should it be startling? Think of 400 million people hungering for freedom. They want to be left alone. They are not savages. They have an ancient culture, an ancient civilization, such variety and richness of languages. Great Britain should be ashamed of holding these people as slaves. You may say, 'You deserve it!' If you do, I will simply say, it is not right for any nation to hold another in bondage."<sup>7</sup> As the opinions of Rajaji and his Master on these two great questions affecting India's future could not be reconciled, Rajaji decided to quit the Congress organization.

After quitting the Congress Rajaji ploughed a lonely furrow, unmindful of the undeserved criticism to which he was subjected by his former colleagues in the national organization. He was fully conscious that his counsel was for the moment unwelcome to the leaders of the land but hoping that better sense would

7. *Mahatma*, D G. Tendulkar, Vol 6, p. 88.

prevail and his practical advice would be accepted later on by them. The end of the Second World War on 5 May 1945 expedited the solution of India's own future and her freedom. The coming into power of the Labour Party in Great Britain as a result of the elections held in 1946 with Mr. Clement R. Attlee as Premier, resulted in the decision of the British Government to withdraw voluntarily from their Eastern Empire. "India has a right to choose," announced Mr Attlee in Parliament on 15 March, 1946, "what will be her future Constitution I hope that the Indian people may elect to remain in the British Commonwealth. If on the other hand, she elects for independence, in our view she has a right to do so."

India's unique fight for freedom provides many examples of heroic patriotism unparalleled in the history of mankind. Even as "the Coolie Barrister" of South African fame became the conqueror of the British rulers of India by the adoption of the twin weapons of truth and non-violence and evoked their moral conscience against holding a hoary people under their heel, a village munsiff's son was chosen by the Queen of England to be her last Viceroy and Governor-General by the strange irony of circumstances! The aristocratic occupants of 'Anand Bhawan' in Allahabad gave up their princely life and gladly faced the rigors of prison at the call of Mahatma Gandhi. Chitta Ranjan Das, who had defended Aurobindo Ghose in the Alipore Bomb Trial in 1907 and obtained his acquittal, and had soon flowered into the beloved leader of Bengal, turned his back on his brilliant practice at the Calcutta Bar and cast in his lot with common men and women in Indian jails for the cause of the country's freedom. Tanguturi Prakasam's life became a saga of supreme sacrifice at the height of his practice as a lawyer at Madras and a day soon dawned when he did not know who would give him his next meal! Subhash Chandra Bose who would have been, perhaps, India's first Prime Minister after independence, had he not met with a tragic death as he led his Indian National Army of Liberation, gave up a brilliant career in the Indian Civil Service in response to Mahatma Gandhi's call. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, who had laughed in contempt at Mahatma Gandhi, as he sat sipping his drink at the Gujarat Club in Ahmedabad in 1915, turned bond-slave to the Apostle of Truth and became

the non-violent Sardar of Bardoli. Jawaharlal Nehru, the apple of his parents' eyes, brought up in the lap of luxury and educated in England, became the beloved heir to the heritage left by the Father of the Nation. What other country has produced such examples of patriotism, courage and sacrifice, all in the course of twenty-five years of its history? What country has given to the world such a galaxy of great men within a period of a quarter of a century, in ancient or modern times? The noblest of these after Mahatma Gandhi, in sublimity of thought, probity of word and exemplary integrity of life and action, in consonance with the highest ideals of honour, was Rajaji, his critic and conscience-keeper, his loyal lieutenant and loving disciple, his devotee and deifier! Rajaji owed the greatness of his political career and the inspiration of his idealism to Mahatma Gandhi as, perhaps, to no other person, apart from the saints and sages of ancient India.



## CHAPTER FOUR

# The Fighter for Freedom

*Generations later, this great and benignant lamp of wisdom and humanity will be remembered and revered when most of those who dominate the political scene today are totally forgotten. Rajaji has carried the story of Indian independence forward into a new chapter—freedom from subjugation of Indians by Indians—the full significance of which will be realised only in the years to come.*

—N.A. Palkhivala

RAJAJI had passed the psalmist's span of three score and ten years when he was last in power as the head of a government. As the Chief Minister of Madras in 1952, he had brought stability to the Congress Party in that State and acted as a bulwark against Communism. At the request of Jawaharlal Nehru he took over the administration of that State again. But the disease of communal discord which dominated the minds of the other leaders did not permit him to continue in power for long. He bade goodbye once and for all to controversial politics in the Congress Party and soon became the mouth-piece of the voiceless millions of the land. Thus having been a fighter for the freedom of his country for over a quarter century, he soon became a fighter for the freedom of his countrymen who had yet to reap the benefits of *Swaraj*.

At this juncture Rajaji found India at the crossroads—a divine destiny after centuries of subjection awaited her or a doom that men could not contemplate ! A decade of freedom had brought her people not all blessing. The Father of the Nation had led the people to the threshold of liberty. But the fruits of freedom were as distant as ever from the common man, who groaned under poverty and grovelled in misery. The rich and the industrial classes had grown richer, capitalising on their money bags and monopolising their influence with officialdom.) The poor had grown poorer, what with soaring prices, high taxation, the horrors of corruption. There was more want in their homes, more callousness on the part of pitiless officials, more unemployment in the land than even before. The late Mr. Damoram Sanjivayya had said on one occasion, when he was the President of the Congress, that those who had been paupers during the freedom struggle were living like princes after India attained independence !

All this was due to the fact that those enjoying power and authority had betrayed the masses. The only hope of redemption for the country was the replacement of the present administration by leaders, whose ideal was integrity in public and in private life, whose ambition was the use of their high authority for the amelioration of the condition of the common folks, whose patriotism was above temptation of any kind and could not be prostituted for perverse ends and personal gain. Therefore Rajaji took upon himself this noble mission of providing such leadership to the country and gathering around him a band of dedicated colleagues and co-workers, diverting their energies into fruitful channels of service to the people, men who could reclaim the country by their own example and precept from the moral degradation into which it had sunk. Thus was born the Swatantra Party with Rajaji's blessings.

As early as 1921 soon after the start of the non-cooperation movement, Mahatma Gandhi had warned the nation against seven sins. These were, according to him, "politics without principles, wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, commerce without morality, science without humanity and worship without sacrifice." Rajaji found infamous lapses from virtue and the good life raising their ugly heads all over the land after independence. It was true that Gandhiji had

designated Jawaharlal Nehru as his political heir regarding whom he had said with unalloyed pride as if he were his own son :

“Who can excel him in the love of the country? . . . If he has the dash and rashness of a warrior, he has also the prudence of a statesman. . . . He is pure as crystal, he is truthful beyond suspicion. He is a knight *sans peur, sans reproche*. The nation is safe in his hands.”<sup>1</sup>

But, alas! the prophecy of Mahatma Gandhi that Jawaharlal Nehru would make good as an able administrator proved untrue in spite of his integrity. No doubt he had many excellences and virtues in his fascinating personality but he failed to make the mark as a statesman. His head was too much in the clouds, feet were not firmly planted on earth. He loved flattery and sycophants soon gathered around him, burning incense at the shrine of his self-pride. An unbounded admiration for Soviet Russia made him copy its industrial methods, stifling the individuality of man in his enthusiasm for rapid progress, and yearning to raise his people to the level of Western standards of life. This led him to embark on policies and programmes that were not in harmony with the ancient culture and civilization of India that even today influences the common folks. India lost the exalted position to which the Father of the Nation had raised her during the freedom struggle. The of non-alignment, enunciated by Jawaharlal Nehru and followed with enthusiasm by him in international affairs, soon became a negative approach. The passing away of Jawaharlal Nehru on 27 May 1964 left no dominating personality in the Congress, capable of coping with the situation. “Sri Jawaharlal Nehru urged by patriotic impulses and early indoctrination,” said Rajaji, “committed the blunder of taking India out of the path of hum lity and put it in the race for industrialization and did all he could to transfer our ideology into that of Soviet Russia. This was the fatal step that has brought us to the present position out of which it requires not only wisdom but indomitable courage to save India. Social justice and removal of disparities

1. *Young India*, 3 October 1929.

of opportunity and equitably distributed welfare are great and worthy ends. But the fatal mistake was the plan to achieve this by the short cut of heavy borrowing and central planning and a permit-license regime which has brought in its wake all that makes Sri Prakasa lament so bitterly."<sup>2</sup>

It saddened Rajaji that the highest in the land were not imbued with a sense of honour or a spirit of honesty in their dealing. When the elite of society were even glorifying the principle that the end justifies the means, how could the lower officials be expected not to stoop in order to make both ends meet? In between the devil and the deep sea the voiceless millions of the land were ground down so heartlessly by the government that their groans could hardly be heard. As long ago as 1922 when he was in jail and *Swaraj* was yet a dream, Rajaji had uttered and recorded these pregnant and wise words in his Jail Diary, which are applicable fully today: "Freedom is often attained by sacrifice of successive generations and we should therefore be prepared to lay at the altar of the country what we could give or suffer without hungering for immediate fruit—even if we do not feel we are able to reach the *Gita* ideal of duty without concern for results altogether. Think where we should have been if our father and grandfathers had made definite sacrifices for freedom's sake. Would we not have carried forward then the battle for freedom with greater faith and vigour? By our sacrifices we have at least made the history of India in this generation an honourable chapter, a relief from the continuous story of surrender, indifference and dishonour. Even this is an inheritance for our children, so let us not lose faith."<sup>3</sup>

An ardent believer in democracy and the democratic way of life, Rajaji opposed the idea of a brute majority oppressing the people and suppressing their sacred rights under the Constitution, because of its voting strength in Parliament and State legislatures. A democratic government must have faith in the loyalty of the people, unperturbed by noisy demonstrations of popular excitement. The confidence of the people in the rightness of its policies is the key to success in a democratic govern-

2. *Swarajya*, 18 December 1965.

3. Rajaji's *Jail Diary* (1922)

ment while in its own turn, it must have faith that it is working for the welfare of the masses. Further, no democratic government should consider all opposition to its programme as hostile. After all, democracy goes from strength to strength when there is a healthy Opposition acting as a check on its activities which are not in the interests of the nation. "Nations and governments are truly democratic only if they can preserve and abide by their democratic Constitutions, even when assailed by difficulties and temptations, and when the rule of law and the fundamental rights may be felt to be a nuisance by an impatient government with a big majority behind it in Parliament which will vote for whatever the government wants, including amendment of the Constitution itself."<sup>4</sup>

Rajaji bewailed the lowering of the standards of purity in the administration and the fall in the probity of its personnel after independence. Mahatma Gandhi had raised India to a position of honour among the nations of the world. His ideals of truth and non-violence had been given the go-by by the government, which seemed to consider them an anachronism in the sixties and seventies in India ! The rulers and the ruled were blindly marching towards a precipice in their moral degeneration, forgetting the noble ideals of *Satyam* and *Dharmam*. Rajaji felt that the people had betrayed Gandhiji's faith in them. "All things that Gandhiji wanted to be done are forgotten and the very opposite of what he wanted are being done. He desired to establish a society in which the people had the largest amount of freedom and the Government took minimum power for itself. The state of things now, as every one knows, is one of rapidly shrinking freedom for the people and increasing power for the State. Gandhiji was against controls with which unfortunately we are now so familiar. The permit-license-raj is not disappearing but has come to invade our kitchens. Gandhiji wanted taxation to be low and simple in form but we have now crushing taxation, and new and yet newer imposts and levies. He wanted the State to be decentralized. But we have, instead, more and more centralization. The decentralization we are asked to accept as a great

achievement, viz, Panchayat Raj, turns out to be a gigantic fraud to get the Congress Party's work done at State expense by State organizations, by the provincial ministries and panchayats. It is not decentralization but the octopus of the party spreading itself to live on State taxes and State power instead of its own popularity. Gandhiji wanted character, courage and integrity to be strengthened. But everything done by the Congress Party, using State power, tends to destroy courage and to extinguish integrity. Gandhiji sought to spiritualize politics. His very entry into politics, he justified on that ground. But we see now, as a result of Congress rule for seventeen years, materialism is spreading and replacing the traditions and ideals of our nation. We see the people, under the pressure of the Government's exhibitionist plans and consequent unbearable taxation, growing more dishonest and unmanly. The elections, the expensiveness of which has become a vested interest of the rich Congress Party with its pistol-control over all the purses of the businessmen of the country, have become more and more bribe-riddled so much so that the people are losing faith in democracy itself. This Government must be changed if we do not wish utterly to dishonour the Father of the Nation."<sup>5</sup>

This strong indictment against the Congress Party and its administration was made by Rajaji during Jawaharlal Nehru's lifetime. But it seemed to have no effect on him or his successors. "The dogs bark but the caravan passes on!" was the comment of Sir Samuel Hoare as Secretary of State for India during the dark days of the civil disobedience movement in the thirties of this century. The Congress leaders seemed to echo his words, keen on perpetuating themselves in power at the cost of moral principles and insidiously converting a democracy into a dictatorship. Rajaji had always raised his voice of dissent against such degradation of the rulers, as the mouthpiece of the toiling millions of the land and as one who had felt it his duty to continue the mission of Mahatma Gandhi and the inculcation of his high principles but it all seemed to no purpose!

Among the objectives which Jawaharlal Nehru set out to

achieve during his premiership, he gave a high priority to socialism and the building up of "a socialistic pattern of society." He had visited Russia on the occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of the Soviet Republic in 1928 and had been greatly impressed by its achievements. He had it in his mind that once India became independent, she should follow Russian methods for the regeneration of his own people. This ideal had gained strength during the succeeding two decades and when he became Prime Minister, he attempted to copy the plans and purpose of Soviet politicians in the industrialization of India and to bring it economically on a level with Western countries like the U.S.A., Great Britain and France.

(Socialism was, no doubt, an ideal worthy of implementation in bridging the gulf between the haves and the have-nots) To that extent Rajaji was in agreement with Jawaharlal Nehru but he differed from the latter with regard to the methods for its fulfilment. He opposed Jawaharlal Nehru on the ground that it was against India's *Dharma* to rob Peter and pay Paul. The rule of law, known as *Dharma*, had always been observed in India from ancient times both by the rulers and the ruled. Whoever violated the strict injunctions of *Dharma* had to pay the penalty for its transgression sooner or later, in this birth or in a future birth. It is on this principle of morality that the right to property must be guaranteed to the citizens by the State. "The free way of life as against life under totalitarian rule," declared Rajaji, "is not possible if the properties of citizens, earned or inherited, are not guaranteed against expropriation by the State without just cause open to review by an independent judiciary. It was not for nothing that Jawaharlal Nehru and others had a guarantee of this nature inscribed in the Constitution. The holding of what you have earned or inherited is essential for free life, for life different from that of serfs. Vague assurances in electoral manifestos or platform speeches are not enough. What the citizen requires is protection under the law which the Constitution gave until now. Under Roman Law, slaves owned what was known as *peculiam*. Citizens in India want something more than *peculiam*."<sup>6</sup>

“The evolution of infeasible citizen’s rights and of parliamentary government, out of one man’s rule,” says Rajaji, “is as interesting as the evolution of man which Darwin had expounded in his *Origin of Species*. The one is biological science and the other is the history of civilization. Both were accomplished by struggle and violence. But what is now evolving in India, without violence or struggle, is the remarkable evolution of totalitarian unitary rule out of a Constitution which sought to guarantee infeasible rights and a federal type of parliamentary government, the process being marked by complacency and a selfish indifference among the elite in spite of a high degree of intellectual awareness.”<sup>7</sup> Rajaji, however, did not feel discouraged at this transformation. He asserted that this feeling of despair and dejection at this hapless state of affairs could be overcome by an overwhelming faith in ourselves and the courage that Gandhiji instilled into the minds of the masses when he started his movement for India’s independence. More than anything else, we must stick to truth and purity in thought and action.

It is the duty of the government to govern justly in the interest of the people, even as it is the duty of the Opposition in Parliament or the legislatures of the land to offer fair and honest criticism of the measures of the party in power, its political objectives and programmes. To this extent, both Government and the Opposition should fulfil their *Dharma* for the nation’s good. A famous slogan of Jawaharlal Nehru when he embarked on the industrialization of India was, “Produce or perish!” But he forgot the fact that production could not thrive under bureaucratic management or official ownership. When a person imbued with the idea of profit takes a personal interest, there is bound to be an increase in production. Rajaji was against Statism or State Capitalism of any kind in order to foster industry and the economic progress of India. “Adopting the methods of Capitalism,” he says, “and grafting them on Statism will do not do the trick. This is the crucial point against Statism, State Capitalism, Communism and other allied ‘isms’. . . . The change in methods is a virtual confession of failure of the Communist.



attempt to go against nature.”<sup>8</sup> A harmony can be achieved, says Rajaji, between production that leads to profit and the prosperity of the community by adopting Gandhiji’s theory of trusteeship of wealth for the common weal.

The proper and effective functioning of government in a democracy depends on the organized will of the people which is made known by elections held from time to time. A number of parties with their own political programmes go to the polls and the results of the votes cast by the qualified citizens determine which party shall be entrusted with power. Normally, the majority party has the right to form the Cabinet and choose its own ministers, although coalition governments have not been unknown. Rajaji concedes the necessity for the existence of the State but he will not admit that the power of the State should predominate over the interests of the individual. The authority of the State must be kept within certain limits if the freedom of the citizen is not to be jeopardised; in other words, the individual citizen is supreme, not the State. Not only should the citizen have a sense of freedom but should also be seen actually enjoying that freedom in an effective manner. Putting in different language, the citizen must be conscious of his freedom and must have the complete feeling of being able to enjoy it.

The consequence is that if the State is considered to be superior to the individual citizen as in totalitarian regimes, the omnipotence of the State works havoc with the freedom of the individual and reduces to a minimum all chances of his enjoying happiness or harmony of life. “It is the citizen that is the reality,” declares Rajaji, “and the tangible and unalterable fact. His freedom must be taken for granted for all mechanism, which is good or bad, being made in parliamentary democracies out of a majority of votes and many other circumstances, not altogether perfect or even good. The frontiers of this mechanism created by citizens for their own good must be strictly and carefully limited. The frontiers of the citizen’s freedom must be as wide as possible.”<sup>9</sup>

Rajaji reminded people that Mahatma Gandhi was in favour

8. *Swarajya*, 16 January 1965.

9. *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 14 August 1960.

of "minimum government" and his ideal was adopted by the framers of the Constitution, who were among the wisest and ablest lawyers and leaders of the land, after more than two years of labour. A most important part of the Constitution is that dealing with the fundamental rights of citizens in a free India, which has been inscribed in the forefront of other privileges of citizens. The policy and programme of the Congress Party, which had been all along in power, had been to erode these basic and essential rights, jeopardising the substance of freedom. Rajaji reminded the people that eternal vigilance was the price of liberty and it must be fought for and preserved, sparing no effort or considering no energy too precious to be wasted. "The call of freedom is loud and insistent. The future depends on the response. When the battle for freedom was fought against Britain, we called for courage and the taking of risk and the response was such as brought success. In the battle for the freedom of the citizen, which is the true substance of the national freedom, there is the same call for courage and the taking of all the risks involved, and may it be that the response will be equally good."<sup>10</sup>

The system of permits and licenses by the grant of which the Congress government ostensibly desired to prevent the concentration of commerce and industry in the hands of a small number of businessmen came in for severe condemnation at Rajaji's hands. He considered it a means by which the money-power of monopolists in trade was at the mercy of the authorities, who doled out their favours only to those who contributed to the funds of the Congress Party and in return, helped them to corner a major portion of the country's industry and merchandise. He was for a free economy and fair competition whereby the best products could be manufactured at minimum cost to the exchequer. So he engaged himself in opposing the Congress regime which he held as being responsible for the above evils in the governance of the country. When he joined the non-cooperation movement in his middle age under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, his ambition was neither acquisition of fame nor power through politics. But the time had come, he declared, when he should lead a revolt

10. *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 14 August 1960.

against the Congress government. "I came to the conclusion five years ago—and I hold it was a correct conclusion—that a movement for real freedom, as important and as serious as the movement for independence from British rule, had not to be vigorously conducted against this misconceived progress towards what will end in the suppression of individual liberty and the developement of the State into a true Leviathan"<sup>11</sup> He castigated in no undeserved language the conversion of what was intended to be a democracy by the founding fathers of the Constitution into a monolithic State of the type of Soviet Russia with all the dark and desolate features of unfeigned totalitarianism visible on its ugly face!

Rajaji was aware how difficult it was for any Opposition to grow up in strength in order to wean the government from its activities, ostensibly for ushering in Socialism into India. But a bold attempt must be made, asserted Rajaji, in this direction if the country was to be saved from the horrors of Communism. "I do not like dictatorships," confessed Jawaharlal Nehru to the French journalist Tibor Mende who recorded a series of talks he had with the Indian Prime Minister at the height of his fame, "I do not like authoritarian regime. I am sure that I would not survive an authoritarian regime. I do not like techniques adopted by the Communist Party. That again means that I would not like to have it in my country."<sup>12</sup> The hatred for authoritarianism expressed by him does not seem to be shared by his daughter in Rajaji's opinion. He wanted the democratic elements in the country to stand up to the Congress government and its policies which were not in the interests of the nation at large. He was optimistic that a reasoned and united Opposition was sure to make headway if an honest attempt was made to expose the ill-advised policies of the government.

Allied to his strong disapproval of the devious methods of the Congress government to direct the commerce of the country into conduits of fruitful source for its own party funds was Rajaji's attack on the taking over by the State of trade and the embarking on business ventures. "I have sometimes used

11 *Swarajya*, 4 July 1964.

12 *Conversations With Mr. Nehru* by Tibor Mende, p. 98.

strong language," he said, "but what language can be too strong for condemning the baneful system of permits and licenses and the hold that a party in office thereby gets over the entire economic life of the nation, which it exploits for strengthening and perpetuating its hold while devoutly hoping it may also help the nation 'Permit-License-Raj' has been condemned by everyone now. People have seen what it has produced by way of corruption, general moral deterioration and building up of monopolies for a chosen few. The permit-license-quota system stands disgraced along with the Congress Party that swore by it and exploited it."<sup>13</sup> "The way of free enterprise," said Rajaji, "is the best road to national prosperity for people who desire to live under democratic rule as distinguished from authoritarianism."

Another aspect of the activity of the Congress government towards depriving citizens of their right to free enterprise, guaranteed by the Constitution, was the nationalization of banks. The prominent banks that have sprung up during the present century have provided a good incentive to individuals in the banking habit as in the West and further, they have been the means of helping businessmen and entrepreneurs. The Congress government nationalized the most prosperous banks which had a large capital and huge deposits with them from customers. Rajaji condemned the proposal when it was first mooted by the authorities. In his opinion the taking over of the banks was against the interests of the people at large, the shareholders and depositors. All the banks have to follow faithfully certain procedures and any failure to do so will land them in financial ruin. Further, they have to fulfil strictly the laws connected with banking institutions and dare not do anything underhand. Banks are the source of funds for trade, commerce and industry to thrive. Under such circumstances, Rajaji considered that there were no substantial grounds for nationalization of banks. "It is clear to me that what is aimed at by pro-nationalizationists is not nationalization but Statism pure and simple. They want the government to have total power over the people's funds and the opportunity to decide to whom the funds should be given. The government does

not mind if instead of profit there is loss owing to bureaucratic official management. This attitude is as ruinous as it is senseless. It is a defeatist attitude that Mr. Chavan, the Finance Minister takes that the nationalization of banks is inevitable. He might as well say that Communism is inevitable, and we should prepare ourselves for it. There is nothing inevitable if the thing is against the interests of the people. The monopolist transfer of all banks to the government management is certainly against the interests of the people and it must be opposed with courage and conviction.”<sup>14</sup>

The Congress Party, according to Rajaji, invented the slogan of “Socialism” in order to capture the votes of an illiterate and an ill-informed electorate about the plans and purposes motivating that party. “Statism is not the road to socialism. It is the way to authoritarianism at the top and serfdom at the bottom.”<sup>15</sup> Rajaji condemned this cant of socialism indulged in by the Congress Party and observed that the journey to socialistic goals lay through adding to the national wealth by offering incentives to workers to increase national production.

Rajaji was against the type of “socialism” that the Congress government was aiming at and the insidious farce that they intended to exhibit to the people by proposing to prepare the country for “a socialistic pattern of society”. Rajaji saw through the mask of mischief lurking behind the grandiose scheme which was nothing else but another brand of Communism. He strove with his timeless vision and tireless vitality to see that India did not become a satellite of Soviet Russia. Rajaji had declared when he became the Chief Minister of Madras State for the second time in 1952 that he was Public Enemy Number One of Communism. “Socialism aims at reducing the disparities of earnings among sections of the people. This cannot be achieved by mere words and promises,” emphasised Rajaji, “but only through policies that help a large expansion of jobs carrying just wages and salaries according to one’s equipment and talent. Any policy which extinguishes freedom, which is the best and most desirable part of democracy, is not socialism but Communism. To tax people heavily and borrow from

14. *Swarajya*, 19 July 1969

15. *Swarajya*, 3 January 1970.

abroad, to invest it all in losing concerns, to depend on Communist votes in order to remain in power, neither any of these nor all of them put together make up socialism.”<sup>16</sup>

A man of high moral principles and a lawyer of no mean repute and calibre, Rajaji was shocked to witness the manner in which the Congress government treated the Indian Princes in the matter of payment of their privy purses. Sardar Patel, the architect of India's unity, had entered into solemn treaties with the erstwhile rulers of the Indian States by which the Government of India had guaranteed the payment of the privy purses to the princes in consideration of their complete and unqualified accession to the Indian Union and giving up, once and for all their rights of sovereignty over their territories and other privileges which they had enjoyed under the British regime for generations. The Congress government in its bid to implement their new-fangled socialist policies decided to do away with their agreements soon after Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister. Under her guidance and leadership they committed a breach of the sacred contracts entered into with the princes, not to speak of their gross violation of the plighted word given to them by Sardar Patel, the then Home Minister of the Government of India. The hero of the Bardoli satyagraha movement in 1930 was not only a strong man in tackling serious and delicate situations; his strength also lay in his strict adherence to principles of honour and honesty and the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. Rajaji was against the deprivation of the privy purses of the princes by amending the Constitution. He felt it was a breach of moral faith with them to go back on the pledges solemnly given by Sardar Patel on behalf of the Government of India. Rajaji's sense of justice and fairplay in the Congress government was rudely shaken when they sought to save a few crores of rupees in this ignoble manner, just to appease a rabid group of members of their own party. He felt that the government had fallen from the ideals of the Father of the Nation in their treatment of the princes, contrary to all canons of law and international convention. “To repudiate one's own obligations after getting full performance from the other side,” said Rajaji, “is disgraceful and unwise . . . . The

immorality of the attempt to deceive the rulers who became Indian citizens and voters in the Union of India, on the basis of the assurances given and after the full performance by the rulers of their part of the contract, is something that cannot be described except by the strongest words of condemnation.”<sup>17</sup>

The Congress government, observed Rajaji, seemed to believe that all criticism of its policies and actions was an obstruction blocking the smooth tenor of its administration. This was a mistaken idea on the part of the authorities for they seemed to forget that the criticism offered by the Opposition parties was healthy assistance which was absolutely necessary for the growth of true democracy. “Democracy ceases to exist if there is no provision of either sort for free criticism of the policies of the government. Windows to let in air are wanted, not glass mirrors which reflect what is inside but which shut out ventilation. Parliament and State legislatures are there, but Parliaments in which opposition is overruled by brute majorities are not enough and are no substitute for public criticism.”<sup>18</sup>

In the best governed democracies of the West like Great Britain and the United States of America, the Opposition has a prominent and important role to play in pointing out the faults of the administration and issuing a warning to the authorities not to embark on a policy which jeopardise the interests of the nation. An Opposition is a necessary nuisance and cannot be done away with if a democratic way of life is to be followed. “Without a vigorous Opposition and full play given to it, the Congress Party will become a mutual benefit association. If the claim that India is governed under the parliamentary system of democracy is to be sustained, it must be clearly recognised that criticism must always accompany government proposal and performances. Criticism from opposition parties and members of the public is not just an irritation which dogs the process of government. It is the fulfilment of a duty on the part of free citizens and an essential of a parliamentary government. The critic is a colleague, not a tolerated

17. *Swarajya*, 26 December 1970.

18. *Swarajya*, 11 December 1965.

seditionist.”<sup>19</sup>

Politics played an important part, no doubt, in the life of Rajaji but he always insisted like his Master, that ethical principles should be the basis of men's thoughts and actions, in the administration of the country. Having been thrown into the whirlpool, it may be said willingly and voluntarily, he always kept his head above the turgid waters churned up from the bottom. He called upon his fellow countrymen to fulfil the great destiny of India in the future by following her ancient *dharma* and by implementing the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi which brought India her freedom and her fame as a great nation of rare integrity and wisdom. He warned the rulers in power to give up their wrong views of statecraft, merely aping some of the ambitions of western nations who worship prosperity at the expense of eternal principles. He called upon his countrymen not to hug to their bosoms a materialistic philosophy of life but to keep their eyes ever fixed on the stars in the firmament above. The soul of the nation must be saved, he declared, and no cost should be considered too great or heavy. “Should we not defend freedom?” he asked in an eloquent appeal, “Should we not defend democracy, should we not defend *dharma*? We must not allow India to be debased, mistaking mass selfishness for patriotism. We must love India and must learn why we should love India. We must fight Statism, we must fight one-party rule, which has devised sufficient self-generating power to perpetuate itself, and we must stem the tide of greed and corruption. We must again bring into being a cadre of sternly honest officials to administer our affairs as was done till recently. It is a sacred duty, if there be any purpose in life and if we are not just spinning tops, spinning till death overtakes us and we go down to be re-absorbed into dead matter, fools mourning round the body that once was alive. When the morality of the nation and its elite is being undermined and threatened with destruction, there is no question of alternative or surrender to superior force. We must fight and protect the soul of the nation from being overwhelmed and destroyed. It is the duty of each citizen to resist

19. *Swarajya*, 8 January 1966.



it to the utmost without waiting for others or counting the cost. For if the nation's morality is lost, there will be nothing left thereafter to save."<sup>20</sup>

20. *Swarajya*, 5 August 1961.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# A Defender of Democracy

*Democracy is the government of the people, by the people, and for the people.*

—Abraham Lincoln

“I AM Public Enemy No. 1 of Communists,” asserted Rajaji when he became Chief Minister of Madras State a second time in 1952. In the twentieth century the world is governed by two main political ideologies—Democracy and Communism. The majority of mankind live either in a democratic State or under a totalitarian regime. In between these two types of present-day submission of people to authority, there is an amorphous mass of humanity whose fortunes and freedom waver at the whim and fancy of dictators, their lives a pawn in the power-mad antics of autocratically-minded despots who desecrate the most cherished dreams and aspirations of their people. These tyrants are fortunately few and far between but still they make their presence felt in the precarious existence of the people under them whom they seek to convert to their own concept of life and liberty. Rajaji took a magnificent part in the emancipation of India and leading it on the road to democracy. His deep study of the free nations of the West and his experience of British rule in India made him welcome the advent of *Swaraj* to his own people. This resulted in Rajaji becoming a doughty defender of democracy throughout his life.

Mahatma Gandhi's definition of democracy is simple and appeals to one and all, whose love for liberty is deep.

"A nation that runs its affairs smoothly and efficiently without much State interference is truly democratic, where such a condition is absent, the form of government is democratic only in name."

This is the basis of Rajaji's concept of true democracy. It is only in a real democracy that people can enjoy their existence. The light of liberty is lost and the lives of the people become desolate if a democratic way of life cannot be ensured to them. In a democracy, the talents and energy of the people are given in a spirit of service and sacrifice for the building up of the nation and the common weal. Whereas under a totalitarian regime the labour of the people has to be whipped out of them under force at the whim and fancy of dictators, who have no faith in the divine origin of man or his divine destiny "Freedom is *Kaamadhenu*.<sup>1</sup> It is better that citizens serve the nation out of free will and in a free way than be drilled, brainwashed and regimented and work as automatons of a political party in power"<sup>2</sup>

Rajaji reminds us that individual freedom is inherent in the people, it is not something granted to them by their government. On the other hand, it is the people who confer powers on the ruling party and arm it with authority to administer the country "Freedom rests not on Constitutions but on the will of the people to be free. Freedom endures only in the measure and only so long, as this will lasts. Liberty is in the hearts of men and women. When it is not there, burning and alive, no Constitution, no law, no court can save it, as an American Judge put it" The Constitution of the U.S.S.R., is on the face of it a fine document, full of promises that point the way to paradise for its people. It enumerates more rights and privileges to them than the American Constitution or the unwritten Constitution of England to its citizens But what do we see in the actual working of the basic law of Soviet Russia? The people

1 *Kaamadhenu* is something that gives one whatever he wants

2 *Swarajya*, 21 October 1961

suffer under the effects of serfdom, they have neither the right of free speech nor freedom of movement anywhere in their country except with the permission of the authorities when they are shadowed by their ever vigilant secret police, they dare not oppose the oligarchy at the top of their monolithic State ! This is communist doctrine in practice, with no Opposition to criticise, much less condemn the rulers. This is where democracy differs from Communism.

A strong Opposition is a necessary *sine qua non* for the successful working of democracy and guarantee of good government, which is unthinkable in a totalitarian State. All those who are suspected of being against the policy of a communist regime are ruthlessly liquidated. Rajaji reminds us that freedom is the fruit of sacrifice made by many generations of men and women in all countries. From the time of the *Magna Carta* the British people have fought against autocracy and tyranny, even sending one of their reigning sovereigns to the block to be beheaded. In France till the time of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette the people were oppressed by their kings and noblemen until they rose in revolt and won their freedom as a result of the French Revolution of 1789. The Colonists of America had to rise in rebellion against the rule of the English kings under the magnificent leadership of George Washington and became independent in 1776. India under the unique leadership of Mahatma Gandhi compelled the British to concede independence to the subjects of their Eastern Empire on 15 August 1947.

The basic difference between democracy and a totalitarian regime is that democracy depends for its successful working on the will and voluntary co-operation of the people while Communism cares but little for the opinions or wishes of those over whom it holds sway. Democracy has no room for violence in its make-up while Communism is based on naked and unabashed violence from top to bottom and bends people to its will by the sheer brutality it practises on those who dare oppose it. In Communism not only are the bodies of men and women bedevilled with brutality of every kind but even their minds are moulded into submission by a soulless regime of terror and intimidation. "We do not want a dumb and unmanned population. But we do want democracy which has no room for

violence. . . Democracies may err but the way to correct errors in democracies is limited by the rule against violence, even if such limitation results in the long run continuance of error demanding patience such as is not easy. It is here that the *Vedic* motto on our national crest speaks in loud tones, *Satyam eva Jayate*. Do not rush to violence in despair and double the wrong but meet it by patience and sacrifice behind powerful argument. Peaceful resistance to authority always involves sacrifices.”<sup>3</sup>

The existence of the party system is an essential feature of a democratic State. Whether there are a few parties or many, whichever wins the votes of the majority of the electorate becomes entitled to form the government. The great democracies of the West, the United States and Great Britain, have only two parties and three parties respectively. The USA has the Democrats and the Republicans contending for power each time an election is held for the Presidency once in four years. In England though there are three parties, namely the Conservatives, the Liberals and the Labour Party, the real contestants for the assumption of authority to run the administration are only the Conservative and Labour Parties at the present time, for the Liberals are too few to have an effectual voice in the choice of forming the government. In the French Republic, however, there are a large number of parties with the result that there is very often a coalition government. But one thing is certain that a party with a brute majority tends to forget the principles of democracy and to pursue policies that smack of pure totalitarianism, snapping its fingers at the rights and liberties of the individual citizen. Such a government embarks on programmes intent on perpetuating itself in power as long as possible.

“To make the personality of the ordinary man creative,” observes Harold J. Laski, “it is necessary to build the conditions within which creativeness is possible. That can only happen when ordinary men are made to feel significant, and this, in the absence of liberty and equality, we cannot hope to achieve. Where there is in a community the absence of those factors which make the interests of men so differently considered,

there is likely to be the means at hand for the development of personality. The enforcement of equality by the State has the great merit of promoting freedom by preventing the private person from the exercise of force for his own ends. By force I do not mean necessarily physical violence, but the use of a differential advantage to hinder another from the opportunity to be the best he can."<sup>4</sup> Therefore it follows that the individuality of man in a democratic State should not be overlooked but given all opportunities to attain the fullest growth. The majority should not make use of its numerical strength to force its decisions down the throats of the minority. Rajaji speaks about the dangers of a massive majority with reference to the Congress government and its ruthless march over the fundamental rights of the people against the letter and the spirit of the Constitution:

This is not the first time that a massive majority has done what is wrong. Did not a massive majority in Athens sentence Socrates to death? So did a massive majority of Jews insist on and obtain the Roman Governor's order for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. A massive majority of MPs in New Delhi has now resolved to destroy the fundamental rights which our freedom founders had thought was necessary for the welfare and freedom of our people. As *The Hindu* in the course of its leading editorial of 6 August 1971 said: 'The sweeping powers conferred on Parliament by the 24th Amendment to tamper with all the rights, including the right to freedom of speech, of freedom of association and of religion, are such that it is not surprising that some leaders of minorities and even some committed socialists have been alarmed over the grim possibilities'.<sup>5</sup>

Not only had the Congress Party cornered power to a dangerous degree, callous to the welfare and interests of the common man, it had also been successful in the distribution of its favours only to such of those who contributed handsomely to its party funds and enabled it to continue in power, without a

4 Harold J. Laski, *A Grammar of Politics*, p 170.

5. *Swarajya*, 14 August 1971.

moral right to do so. This it had done, by what Rajaji called the establishment of the "Permit-License-Raj".

Rajaji brands the insidious attempt on the part of the State to involve itself in an unholy competition with the individual citizen in various fields of his life and activities by the comprehensive term "Statism". That is, the State replacing the citizen in healthy nation-building efforts and endeavours at the expense of his progress and prosperity, often crippling him with restrictions and cutting off his wings of action in the adventure of life and the achievement of real liberty. Rajaji considers that this Statism is but the first step towards a totalitarian regime in the offing and borders dangerously on Communism. The leaders of the Congress Party equated statism with socialism, says Rajaji, but he reminded them that even Jawaharlal Nehru with all his enthusiasm for socialism, drew a distinction between Socialism and Communism and denied that the ideology of the one is the same as that of the other. "I am deeply convinced," declared Jawaharlal Nehru, "that the methods in certain communistic societies, that is, too much coercion and suffering, are not the right methods."<sup>6</sup> Long before he became Prime Minister of India he had visited Soviet Russia in 1928 on the Tenth Anniversary of the Russian Revolution, recording his impressions in a book "Soviet Russia". Though on his first visit to Russia he had found much to admire in Communism and the communist way of life, he was greatly disillusioned soon afterwards. He discovered that millions had no rights worth the name of freedom and had been made mere pawns in political philosophy that wrought havoc with the dignity of man and his individuality. "I had long been drawn to Socialism and Communism," he said in his *Autobiography* published in 1936, "and Russia had appealed to me. Much in Soviet Russia I dislike—the ruthless suppression of all contrary opinion, the wholesale regimentation, the unnecessary violence (as I thought) in carrying out various policies."<sup>7</sup>

Rajaji's attack on Communism is based as much on his boundless belief in a beneficent God as the totalitarian ideology is a denial of a Divine Being, the Creator of the Universe.

6 *Conversations with Mr. Nehru* : by Tibor Mende, p. 32.

7. Jawaharlal Nehru *Autobiography*, p 361.

Communism desires to wreck the soul of man on the rock of regimentation, ruining him without any hope of redemption. Communism seeks to destroy the individuality of man and direct his incomparable mind into the dark caverns of despair and frustration of spirit. Communism wields the ancient trident of tyrants—fear, frustration and fetters—in order to bring millions into submission under its heel and crushes all that is noble in a human being into nothingness and a negation of the divine destiny of man. Lastly, Communism confines the free wings of man yearning for light and air, song and sunshine, within the iron bars of a cage constructed out of a callous indifference to the infinite capacity of human beings in their quest for Heaven !

Rajaji's love for democracy and his loyal adherence to its principles is refreshing in lurid contrast to the retrograde attitude of the then ruling party since independence. While offering lip service to democratic ideals, they did all that they could to discredit democracy and deny its benefits to the common men. He deprecated strongly the prevalence of one party rule for a continual period of nearly quarter of a century, leading to an unhealthy trend towards totalitarianism in the administration. "The successful working of parliamentary democracy," said Rajaji, "depends on two factors: first, on a broad measure of agreement among all classes of citizens about the objectives of government; secondly, on the existence of a two-party system, in which each of the big political groups possesses effective and continuous leadership and is strong enough to take over the responsibility of government when the majority of the country's voters wish it. If political opinion does not succeed in crystalizing into two fairly even balanced groups, the semblance of democracy may survive but real parliamentary democracy will not be there. When one party always remains in power and dissent is dissipated among unorganized individuals and relatively insignificant groups which cannot coalesce, government will inevitably become totalitarian"<sup>8</sup> Rajaji had correctly diagnosed the disease in the body politic that was undermining the rights enshrined in the Constitution. The Congress government had been treating the basic law of the land as if it were a plaything



or a lifeless block of wood for them to hew and hack at in order to shape it for their political purposes. Rajaji laid emphasis on the need for an effective Opposition which should fulfil its *dharma* of criticising the rulers when they went wrong. If the opposition should be weak or fail to do its duty by the people, the country will be ruined not only materially but also in terms of moral fall from the high ideals whose adoption by Gandhiji exalted it in the esteem of world nations, bringing freedom in its wake.

"A strong Opposition is essential for the health of democratic government. In a democracy based on universal suffrage, government of the majority without an effective opposition is like driving a donkey on whose back you put the whole load in one bundle. The two-party system steadies movement by putting a fairly equal load into each pannier. In the human body, two eyes and two ears enable a person to place the objects seen and heard. A single-party democracy soon loses its sense of proportion. It sees but cannot place things in perspective or apprehend all sides of a question. That is the position today."<sup>9</sup> Rajaji was right in his opinion that the various political parties in India were frittering away their energies in opposition to the Congress Party, without combining together to pull it down from its position of supremacy. "It is good to have a giant's strength but tyrannous to use it so," said Shakespeare. Rajaji echoed the wisdom of the Bard of Avon but the Congress giant was going on merrily without caring a jot or little for the opposition parties, stabbing democracy in the back in the name of socialism and the building up of a socialistic pattern of society. "The dogs bark but the caravan passes on," said Sir Samuel Hoare, the Secretary of State for India, in the British Parliament, at the height of the freedom struggle, deaf to the demands of the Indian people for *Swaraj*. The Congress rulers of India had become worthy descendants, gloating in their hearts at the discomfiture of the opposition parties!

## CHAPTER SIX

# The Internationalist

*We stand at the end of an era and on the threshold of a new period of history. Standing on this watershed, which divides two epochs of human history and endeavour, we can look back on our long past and look forward to the future that is taking shape before our eyes. Asia, after a long period of quiescence, has suddenly become important again in world affairs. If we view the millennia of history, this contact of Asia has played a mighty role in the evolution of humanity. It was here that civilization began and man started on his unending adventure of Life. Here the mind of man searched for Truth unceasingly and the spirit of man shone out like a beacon which lighted up the whole world.*

From Jawaharlal Nehru's Inaugural Address at the Asian Relations Conference held at New Delhi on 23 March 1947.

A DEEP and abiding interest in international affairs marked Rajaji's public life and political career. Being one who had taken a substantial part in India's struggle for *Swaraj* and having also been responsible in raising her to a position of prestige and dignity among world nations, he felt after retiring

from the office of the Governor-General and other distinguished positions in the Central Cabinet at New Delhi, that he should not devote himself only to home affairs but should also engage himself in problems that agitated other countries. His keen intellect and uncanny gift for probing into the heart of a problem, however complicated and intricate, enabled him to take a balanced and practical view while others, who were swayed by passions and partisanship, found themselves entangled in a mesh of Machiavellian intrigue and counter intrigue. Rajaji had accepted Mahatma Gandhi's magnificent ideal of the spiritualization of politics. He therefore suggested to the statesmen of other countries the application of the same ethical standards and moral principles when they were confronted with difficult and delicate situations. His words may have fallen on deaf ears and his advice may have been unheeded but such apathy to the conscientious advice of a thinker of rare acumen and remarkable integrity has landed the world in the unhappy situation in which it finds itself at the present day. He always considered that "the rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance", especially where the interests and welfare of large masses of people in conflict were considered. Being a great humanitarian first and last, Rajaji always thought of the common man, whether it was in India or in Indonesia, Great Britain or Germany, the United States of America or the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. He always prayed and worked for the ushering in of a day when there would be a World Government in which all nations, big and small, participated to build a paradise on earth for the poor and the rich alike!

Before we consider Rajaji's views on international problems, it is worth while to compare his opinions with those of contemporary leaders in India who guided her destiny. The most notable among them was Jawaharlal Nehru for whom Rajaji had great regard and affection but from whom he differed strongly on his policies and programme of action. His chivalrous attitude to India's first Prime Minister was such that when he passed away on 24 May 1964, Rajaji cried out in agony: "He was the most civilized amongst us all. The country can at this juncture afford to lose me a thousand times but not Jawaharlal Nehru!" A tower of moral strength and support to Jawaharlal Nehru when Rajaji was Governor-General of India and later

when he was Home Minister of the Central Government till 1952, he found himself unable to accept the methods of administration and the motives behind what Jawaharlal Nehru did at home and abroad. The most important subject, perhaps, on which he differed from Jawaharlal Nehru was the principle of non-alignment, which the latter propounded and practised when dealing with foreign countries. Jawaharlal Nehru summed up non-alignment in these words

“Non-alignment, despite the negative form of the term, is a positive concept and we do not propose to have a military alliance with any country, come what may. The moment we give up the idea of non-alignment, we lose every anchor we hold on to and we simply drift.”<sup>1</sup>

This principle of non-alignment was foreshadowed in the very first speech he delivered as the Head of the Interim National Government formed in September 1946. Broadcasting the foreign policy of the Government of India he said :

“We propose, as far as possible, to keep away from the power politics of groups, aligned against one another, which have led in the past to world wars, and which may again lead to disasters even on a vaster scale. The world, in spite of its rivalries and hatreds and inner conflicts, moves inevitably towards closer co-operation and the building up of a world commonwealth. It is for this One World that India will work, a world in which there is the free co-operation of all peoples, and no class or group exploits another.”<sup>2</sup>

That pronouncement as India's Foreign Minister made Jawaharlal Nehru justly famous as the exponent of the policy of non-alignment with either of the two power blocs of the West. The reaction of some nations to this idea was retrograde while others applauded non-alignment as the only method of avoiding a conflagration that would destroy all that was precious

1. Jawaharlal Nehru, *India's Foreign Policy*, p. 326.

2. *India's Foreign Policy*, p. 2.

in civilization. Jawaharlal Nehru considered that his policy ensured the continuance of human freedom, the dignity of the individual, the happiness of mankind in general and last but not least, the harmony of good relations between big nations and small nations.

The basis of the policy of non-alignment was Jawaharlal Nehru's staunch belief in non-violence, which was one of the twin weapons wielded by Mahatma Gandhi in his fight for India's freedom. He had become the favourite lieutenant of Gandhiji in his campaign for India's liberty and had accepted the ideals of truth and non-violence as essential for success. Mahatma Gandhi had declared on a memorable occasion that *ahimsa* and truth were as his two lungs and that he could not exist without either of them. Jawaharlal Nehru's acceptance of the principle of *ahimsa* or non-violence did not mean that he would advise people to run away when attacked by a ruffian. Nor did it make him a pacifist. "I am not a pacifist," he declared in 1956. "I do recognize that under certain circumstances, one has to fight. It depends less on theory than on the background of the people, on what they can do. Even Mr. Gandhi, who was a great pacifist, always said that it was better to fight than to be afraid. He meant that you must not surrender to evil, to basic evil, and that you must preferably fight in a peaceful way. If you cannot do that, then fight in the military way. But don't surrender to evil."<sup>3</sup>

Jawaharlal Nehru worked for world peace without being a pacifist. His aim was the implementation of Mahatma Gandhi's ideals by pursuing the path of non-alignment. The Big Power blocs of the West were each intent on dominating the world with their own ideology without bothering about what might happen to mankind in case of an armed conflict, in which the most lethal weapons of nuclear warfare would be used by them to destroy their enemy. They forgot that success or defeat for either party meant the destruction of the glorious heritage of humanity, its precious culture and incomparable civilization, leading to the ruin of millions of innocent people, who pine for peace and happiness.

Rajaji was an avowed pessimist regarding the success of the

policy of non-alignment. He felt that India should take a definite and determined stand on the side of the great democracies of the West like the United States, Great Britain and France in their opposition to the totalitarian doctrines and regimes that were casting their sinister shadows across the world. The freedom that India had won after a long and arduous struggle with Britain would be a mere mirage if the minds of men were infected with the negative policy of non-alignment, instead of their lending active support to the ideals of democracy. Rajaji wanted to stem the creeping tide of Communism and save the simple and credulous masses of his countrymen from its vicious grip. The idea of non-alignment does not mean that India should be anxious to purchase "peace and security at any price," which would surely destroy her independence. Hence Rajaji declared that there was a positive need for the revision of India's foreign policy in order to ensure the fulfilment of her great ideals. The goal of non-alignment, however laudable in terms of achieving world peace, should be deemed to have no meaning—a mere delusion hugged fondly without any redeeming feature—after China had invaded India's northern border while Soviet Russia merely looked on as an indifferent spectator without taking any concrete steps for preventing China's aggression on India. This clearly proved, said Rajaji, that the doctrine of non-alignment would be an excellent policy for India if her independence could cover the economic needs as well as the defence requirements of the country arising from a national policy of non-alignment. "So far as India is concerned, after the Chinese aggression and after the disappointment in our expectation that Russia would interfere, it is clear that our attachment to non-alignment is reduced to a meaningless superstition. We tried hard to get the Soviet Union to see our plight and appealed to her to save our non-alignment, but Russia was not willing or was not able to induce China to call off her aggression. To believe that Russia will, later on, help us to retain our frontier... is really to fool ourselves."<sup>4</sup> The utter futility of this fallacious policy of non-alignment, said Rajaji was evident from the fact that the then ruling party was

<sup>4</sup> *The Hindu*, 23 December 1960.

more intent on defending non-alignment than on defending the country.

Rajaji was not a mere carping critic of the Congress government or its policies as put forward by Jawaharlal Nehru and implemented in its relations with foreign Powers. He would not only find fault, when necessary, with its domestic or foreign policy but also offer constructive suggestions to wean them from their wrong path in the true interests of the welfare of India and her people. The policy of a neutral strategy that is at the basis of non-alignment exposed its weakness and utter lack of substance when China attacked India in the Himalayan region. In support of this argument Rajaji quoted with approval an article by Prof. Werner Leir in the London monthly, *Eastern World*. The learned writer said: "India came within the sphere of a powerful nation's imperialistic drive. One of the conditions for successful neutralism was the absence of such an entanglement. India ignored this difference even after the grabbing of Tibet, the construction of a road through the northern tip of Ladakh in 1956, the building of strategic roads and airfields along the whole Himalayan border, the threats to the border kingdoms and the softening of the border people by subversion and propaganda. Yet India steadfastly adhered to neutralism and rationalised her attachment to it. Had India more modestly treated neutralism as a *strategy* and limited it to where it was useful, and not adhered to it as a doctrine or a permanent way of life, she might have anticipated China's aggressive intentions and prepared for them. China, always cautious, might not have attacked India even as she has not attacked so far any other nation on her borders which is protected by an alliance."<sup>5</sup>

The only way of India encountering any further aggression by China or any other hostile Power was entering into an alliance with another major world Power, rather than embarking on an arms race. It might be difficult to have a profitable alliance, Rajaji admitted, due to India's past indifference to offers of friendship. But an attempt at obtaining aid was sure of success as there were basic bonds of culture and history between India and the Western democracies. "The way to

peace and progress," argued Rajaji, "is alliance and its potential power, rather than actual hardware. An armanent buying race to replace the Himalayan wall is not the way to progress or peace or strength, but a short-cut to bankruptcy and collapse. Alliance has assumed for us greater significance now than before. The potential power of friendship secured by diplomacy is a far safer and richer plan of defence than a heavy arms build-up. It calls, however, for courage and humility and the discarding of old rigidities and semantic-based fallacies—a difficult demand to make of the present regime in Delhi."<sup>6</sup>

Internationalism in politics leads to the concept of a world government and the quest for world peace—two ideals for which Rajaji always engaged his efforts and energies. But there is a higher and nobler concept of internationalism in the realms of civilization and culture, literature and art. When one remembers that Dr Alfred Nobel, the Swedish scientist, has built the greatest monument to his memory by founding the Nobel Prize for Science and Medicine, Literature and Peace, etc., open to all eminent men at the top in these fields of achievement without distinction of caste or creed, clime or country and that the Prize has been awarded year after year to the greatest men, it is no wonder that an intellectual of the front rank among the world's intellectuals, should shed his insularity and plead for the adoption of an international language like English as the *lingua franca* of independent India. "I want the winds from every side to be blown across my country," said Mahatma Gandhi who fought against insularity of every kind being injected into the minds of men by the so-called leaders in the name of patriotism. Gandhiji loved India and her people intensely but his love was not parochial, extending beyond its borders to all corners of the world and embracing every human being from China to Peru, even in the days before he led his country to liberty. A true follower of his Master, Rajaji was an internationalist in the matter of language also and wanted his countrymen to adopt English as their own language while cherishing their own languages and their literature, ancient and modern. He fought for the retention of English against the diehard tribes of poli-



ticians who plumped for Hindi as the official language for purposes of administration. English had brought unity to the various parts of the sub-continent, he said, and it was because of our knowledge of English and its vast literature and thought, that Indians were able to compel the British to withdraw from India voluntarily. Why then, he questioned, should we banish English from our midst, which has brought us so many blessings in its wake? He boldly declared that the giving up of English would bring disaster to the country, it would only balkanise India and break it up and its people into various small groups of selfish men, with parochialism ruling their minds and not patriotism of the noblest kind moving their souls to yet higher endeavours and efforts "Unless we wish to hasten disintegration and become the laughing stock of the world, we must put the Hindi claim to replace English in cold storage and meanwhile let the *status quo* be the rule. We can carry on as we carried on from 1947 to 1950 with the dignity and world respect which we then commanded" 7

English has been responsible for peace and progress in India and it has built itself into the hearts of millions on a solid foundation of rock, which cannot now be shaken except with disastrous consequences to the country. How can we forget the fact, that the treasures of English literature have moulded the minds and stirred the souls of the noblest and greatest sons and daughters of India during the last hundred years? It is undesirable as well as impracticable to think of giving up English at any future date in favour of Hindi, which should only be given the status of a regional language. There is absolutely no room for compromise with regard to the necessity of retaining English indefinitely "I am one of the oldest now among those living who were in the fight for political emancipation. I have to be a rebel in the matter of language as I have been in the battle to recognize the natural laws of production of wealth and to give up the vain effort to ignore them. I have now to appeal to the University professors and the youth learning under them to revolt against what the politicians are seeking to do—to uproot the language of study, reference and instruction in modern enlightenment, *viz*, English which

has rooted itself in the universities and to rely on a new mixed plantation which it is hoped will efficiently take its place. This is a war against reality, doomed to failure and disasters of great size. We cannot write off the history of two hundred years at the call of nostalgia or love of classic India. It was not merely a period of foreign rule. It was a period of great world changes, a period of new enlightenment, and technological progress alongside of foreign rule.”<sup>8</sup>

It is not Hindi or any other regional language that gives dignity to the nation, continues Rajaji, but India’s classical language, Sanskrit, in the golden past. But at the present day he asserts that India’s classical language is English, which binds all Indians with a strong rope. “It is a medium which is a sustaining blood-vessel of nutrition and national unity.” Rajaji considers that unity is not achieved by regimentation either in language or in dress or in thought. He believes that variety is the spice of life and the various languages in the country should all develop in their own way, while fostering the feelings of friendship with those who speak other languages and fusing the people ultimately into one united nation in spite of their diversities of thought. His opponents thought that he was against Hindi, forgetting that he was one of the most ardent propagandists for Hindi in the South of India, nearly half a century ago. Even at the present day he is not against making Hindi restricted to its place as a regional language but he stoutly denies Hindi the supreme place in India’s life and thought at the expense of English. “I still believe in making Hindi compulsory”, he frankly confesses, “as a subject in schools, although I am against its replacing English as the official language of the Union of India. People think that this is a contradictory attitude. But it is not. You don’t bring unity to the country by imposing uniformity. Instead you make the people split by creating bad feelings between them. Distribution of wealth is good if you believe that wealth itself is good. But language is a more important possession than wealth.”<sup>9</sup>

Over thirty years have passed since the defeat of the Axis

8 *Swarajya*, 19 August 1967.

9 *I Meet Rajaji* by Monica Felton, p. 87.

Powers in May 1945, when the Allies of the democratic nations and Soviet Russia struck the death-knell of Hitlerism and Fascism. But their victory has not all been a blessing to the world. It has left more baneful results than beneficent effects on mankind. For, with the proud consciousness of having humbled their enemy, the Big Powers of the West have begun to pile up atomic and nuclear arms, each suspicious of the others, each lusting for supremacy, each absolutely callous to its moral duty to see that its unbridled ambition does not lead to the tragic destruction of humanity and its priceless heritage of ages. A cold war, more threatening to the world's civilization and culture, has developed between the democracies of the West and their totalitarian counterparts. This cold war not only affects the peace and happiness of millions in their own countries but also involves in its wicked grip the innocent and simple masses in the under-developed countries of Asia and Africa. India, belonging to the latter group, has to suffer the consequences of being within the sphere of influence of the insidious propaganda of the totalitarian Powers and their programme to achieve supremacy for themselves and their doctrines. Rajaji was one of the few statesmen of international reputation who had boldly condemned this attitude of authoritarianism in spite of their professed desire for establishing peace and concord among all nations. In order to dissolve the foul atmosphere of deadly doubt and dangerous possibilities to the security of other nations, Rajaji took the initiative in addressing a letter to the Soviet Premier, Krushchev, in which he pleaded strongly for the unilateral abandonment of nuclear weapons by the Soviet Government in war. "It is needless for you to point out to me the lapses of the Western Powers. I know them all and I have been pointing them out publicly," Rajaji continued, "but a supreme moment has now arrived when your Republic can attain undying glory, a great and historic step whose moral force will be irresistible. The pattern of competition in the future would change from one of destruction to the unravelling of the mysteries of nature and the promotion of human welfare."<sup>10</sup>

The response of Mr. Krushchev to Rajaji's letter contained

a reference to the discussion he had with Rajaji on the preservation of world peace even during a Cultural Festival arranged especially for the Russian Premier. Krushchev expressed his views on nuclear disarmament and confessed that he had his own doubts about the feasibility of unilateral action, and its moral "chain reaction" on other Great Powers, if Russia should take the initiative in the matter by renouncing the use of nuclear weapons. Krushchev concluded by stating that after a great and prolonged discussion on the subject, the Soviet Government was reluctant to take upon itself the unilateral obligation. Rajaji sent a rejoinder soon after to Krushchev appreciating the latter's anxiety to end the cold war. "The very pith and substance of the cold war is suspicion," said Rajaji in his letter to the Russian Premier "It can be put an end to only by one party or the other beginning with its own unilateral step . . . . This necessarily involves risk. But the cold war cannot be ended by any process that does not involve risk. The cold war is going on developing a terrible risk by itself. We have to compare one risk with another. Ending the cold war means suspending our suspicions. The argument against any step towards it is suspicion itself. We are therefore in a terribly vicious circle. The more I think of it, the clearer it is to me that unless we produce the miracle in the shape of unilateral action, we cannot hope to end this cold war before it bursts into flames." <sup>11</sup> An equally long rejoinder to this communication of Rajaji from Krushchev mentioned that in the hope that other nations would emulate their good example, Russia had largely reduced its armed forces. But, continued Mr. Krushchev, they had been disappointed. "We are convinced," concluded the Soviet statesman, "that if the unilateral action undertaken by us now were supported by similar efforts of the Western Powers, it would lead not only to the improvement of the international situation but would open the way to newer steps with the purpose of deliverance of humanity from the armament race and from the menace of atomic war."<sup>12</sup>

Nearer home the one absorbing topic of immediate interest to Rajaji in the international field was the relations of India

11. Monica Felton, *I Meet Rajaji*, pp. 106-107.

12. *Ibid.*

and Pakistan *inter se*. Though he believed that in the interests of both countries, their separate existence as independent States was inevitable, he could never reconcile himself to the idea that they were two different nations, who had parted each with a separate status of sovereignty. On the other hand he considered that they were like two brothers who had only partitioned their ancestral estate, inheriting their common legacy of culture and civilization built up by them down the centuries of their co-existence in a common country. Consequently Rajaji argued that they should never look upon each other as enemies or rivals in any field but as partners intent on working for the welfare of the masses both in India and Pakistan.

The need for permanent goodwill between the citizens of the two independent States was reiterated by Rajaji. Even to the extent of being misunderstood, he pleaded again and again that the relations between erstwhile brethren should be marked by a spirit of "forgive and forget", whatever the tragic events that had happened after the partition of India. "It is an intolerable evil," he wrote, "that two masses of human beings should have feelings of kindly brotherhood towards each other but that they should be prevented from acting according to their nature by the governments that they respectively appoint for themselves, and worst for all, that the two people should feel wholly impotent about it. Both the government and the people submit to the paradox as inevitable. The consequence is that the governments make a deliberate effort to remove the paradox by bringing people to think as their governments do! The governments have enormous power and effective instruments for this conversion. The cure in this case is certainly worse than the disease, for it substitutes friendliness by suspicion, fear and hatred."<sup>13</sup>

The tragedy that followed on the heels of the Tashkent Peace Agreement between India and Pakistan after their war in 1965, namely, the death of Lal Bahadur Shastri, the Indian Prime Minister, saddened Rajaji immeasurably. He compared the passing away of Lal Bahadur Shastri soon after the victory for peace at Tashkent with the loss of General Wolfe after winning Quebec for great Britain in 1759. Rajaji condemned

13 *Swarajya*, 27 August 1960.

the attitude of some elements in the two countries who could only think in terms of conflict and victory in war. "A seed has been sown at Tashkent," said Rajaji, "which is small like the tiny seed of the *Nyagrodha* tree which the *Rishis* in the *Chandogya Upanishad* asked Swetaketu to observe. Yet in this tiny seed is contained the great and precious wide branching tree of friendship and mutual co-operation between two big nations—a *Nyagrodha* tree of co-operation which will make South Asia great and powerful and become a strong pillar of civilization, that will attract the wonder and love of the nations of the world."<sup>14</sup> As a consequence of the Tashkent Agreement, Rajaji foresaw an era of neighbourly goodwill and mutual benefit between India and Pakistan in a common economic effort, founded on secularism and toleration of each other's faith, and without any inconsistency with their own individuality or sovereignty or affecting their national pride.

Not being a narrow-minded nationalist but a great believer in the good wrought by working for international amity and goodwill, Rajaji was equally emphatic on the sheer necessity for observing the principle of co-existence. The world, as it is today, and as it has always been, contains many nations, many cultures, many civilizations and also ideologies of different kinds. The survival of man demands that there should be a sort of unexpressed but clearly understood basis of acceptance of different forms of thought so that men may continue to pursue their objectives for the common welfare of humanity. Man's progress in the scale of civilization down the ages has been indicated by the gulf that divides man from the wild beast and the gap that lies between men leading a wild nomadic life and those in a cultured and civilised society. Similarly when the different nations of the world have to live together and bring their own contribution to enrich the heritage of humanity, they cannot afford to alienate themselves either in thought or in action from the others. This concept of common ideals and common endeavours in the interests of mankind led to the founding of the United Nations Organization in 1945 soon after the termination of the Second World War. Rajaji had firm faith in the efficacy of the principle of the co-existence of nations. "The

14. "The Onlooker Annual", 1966.

human family which issued out of the same parents, whether according to religious traditions or according to the theory of the evolution of species, has developed different features and different complexions of the skin. So also has it developed different ways of life according to the differing physical and historical causes that shaped them, either through long years of slow change or through sudden revolutions. If we love and desire peace, we should learn to recognize the value of our neighbour's way of life (to him) as we value our own and tolerate one another without seeking to impose our convictions and manners on others. Co-existence is the name given to this tolerance and this wisdom, for this is wisdom, intolerance being folly."<sup>15</sup>

A man of many-splendoured vision and mature wisdom, Rajaji was also a great optimist, and had a boundless faith in the future of man. He therefore dreamt of a day when there would be a world government. At the present time the Big Powers are in the vicious grip of the cold war, endangering not only their own security but also the very existence of other nations whom they will not allow to develop in their own way, according to their traditions and culture. The statesmen of Western nations, who are responsible for this world insecurity by their callous race in armaments, must give up their folly and pave the way for people of different countries, cultures and civilizations, to become one human family, intent on giving of their best for the benefit of mankind and having the noble ideal of working for the harmony and happiness of all the nations of the world. It may not be possible to establish world government so easily, but world peace is within the reach of man if only he makes an honest effort, considering no loss of power or prestige too great for that purpose, whether such giving up affects the big nations or the small, in the East or in the West. "The secret of world peace," said Rajaji, "is in doing away with all international hurdles and protective and revenue tariffs and making the commerce in commodities and of thought between nations completely free, as it was between the Chinese Empire and India in the old days. It may be a dream, but a dream that should be dreamed persistently. It would be easy

15. *Swarajya*, 3 June 1961.

to get all nations to exempt medicines and baby foods and the like from all customs duties. It would be then possible to bring other commodities gradually into the scheme of free commerce, until the human family discovers itself as one industrious people working in convenient centres, and competing with one another to improve quality and reduce costs of commodities without erecting walls against one another creating artificial scarcity and adding to the prices for the sake of government revenue. The budgets of the nations and their tax systems will then suffer a sea-change which may not be fully visualized now but which will make for greater human happiness all round ”<sup>16</sup>

16. *Swarajya*, 17 December 1966.



## CHAPTER SEVEN

# A Crusader for World Peace

*We have too many men of science, too few men of God. We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than about peace, more about killing than we know about living.*

From the Speech of General Omar  
S. Bradley, Chief of Staff,  
United States Army at Boston  
on 10 November 1948.

RAJAJI was not a politician seeking power for his personal ends, as is the case with most of the tribe, but a statesman who worked for the welfare of his people and the good of humanity at large. He responded to the call of Mahatma Gandhi for the achievement of India's independence, when he was in middle age without thinking of his future or that of his own family. A brilliant criminal lawyer, he would have gathered the plums of his profession or easily gained the distinction of becoming a High Court Judge, the crown and consummation of a career at the bar. But none of these considerations weighed with him when the call for his country's freedom fell on his ears. He burnt his boats and bade goodbye to the profession of law. From that moment he never looked back but became a devoted lieutenant of Mahatma Gandhi, giving him of his utmost faith

and fidelity. He became as the years passed a supreme exemplar of the Mahatma's way of life and thought, a living embodiment of his Masters's noble ideals, a true disciple of the Father of the Nation.

Long before the attainment of freedom by India, Rajaji while undergoing his first prison sentence recorded in his *Jail Diary* (1921-22) his doubts if India's freedom would bring happiness to the people at large. With prophetic vision he seemed to have foreseen the fate of India as it is today, filled with power-hungry politicians, greedy for gold, throwing all ethical principles to the winds, torpedoing truth and non-violence, adopting most unabashedly the most undesirable of all political maxims, namely, "the end justifies the means", even as the canker of corruption is eating into the fair flower of freedom and polluting its rare perfume !

"We all ought to know", observed Rajaji, "that *Swaraj* will not at once or, I think, even for a long time to come bring better government or greater happiness for the people. Elections and their corruptions, injustice, the power and tyranny of wealth, and inefficiency of administration, will make a hell of life as soon as freedom is given to us. Men will look regretfully back to the old regime of comparative justice, and efficient, peaceful, more or less honest administration. The only thing gained will be that as a race we will be saved from dishonour and subordination. Hope lies only in universal education by which right conduct, fear of God and love will be developed among all the citizens from childhood. It is only if we succeed in this that *Swaraj* will mean happiness. Otherwise it will mean the grinding injustices and tyranny of wealth. What a beautiful world it would be, if everybody were just and God-fearing and realised the happiness of loving others ! Yet, there is more practical hope for the ultimate consummation of this ideal in India than elsewhere".

When Rajaji found that within a few years of India becoming independent his forecast had proved true, it soon effected in him a transformation from India's freedom fighter to a fighter for the freedom of Indians—the freedom of the common man, the preservation of his fundamental rights under the Constitution, the upholding of the dignity of the individual ! All these had been slowly eroded by laws passed by the Government since

India became a Republic. The prestige of the country had fallen low among world nations, soon after touching its peak when it became independent. India was now passing through a crisis of the spirit, even as its teeming millions had become debtors to all the nations of the world for their food, nay, for their very existence from day to day !

Those in power and authority had become slaves of trite slogans like "a socialistic pattern of society", "*garibi hatao*", (remove poverty) etc, which had been coined by the Congress Party with the intention of moving the mindless masses to vote in the elections for its own continuance in office. Strangely enough they had succeeded in their endeavours to entrench themselves in power. These facts did not, however, discourage Rajaji or drive him into despair. He discussed the state of affairs with like-minded men of prominence not belonging to the ruling party and founded the "SWATANTRA PARTY" in 1956. No better assessment of Rajaji's motives in starting the new political party can be given than that of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, President of the Indian Union for ten years. "During latter years," said Dr. Rajendra Prasad, "Rajaji has felt that in a democracy, a well-organized Opposition is as necessary as the party in power. With that end in view he has founded the Swatantra Party, which has a programme of its own which differs from that of the Congress and can very well form an alternative to the programme of the Congress, if it can gain the support of the people. With the sole exception of the Communist Party, no other party has got such a clear-cut and well-defined programme differing from that of the Congress as the Swatantra Party has." Rajaji felt it his mission in life thereafter to lift the country up from the morass into which it had sunk due to the cupidity and corruption of its administrators and to ensure for the common man the fruits of freedom for which they had suffered and sacrificed.

Rajaji was not insular in his ideas or parochial in his patriotism. A statesman of world calibre, he took an abiding interest in international affairs. He worked for the welfare of humanity and sought to bring about world peace out of the rivalries of the Power blocs of the West. In his estimation, a man's life is not worth living if he does not engage himself in the service of his fellowmen. It was also one of the ideals of his great Master to

become a servant of humanity without distinction of caste or creed or clime. Rajaji's time and energy were taken up as much by his yearning to ameliorate the conditions of the masses in India as by his fervent desire to realise the dream of world peace. True, the obstacles to its achievement were neither few nor of negligible strength but he went on undaunted from day to day all through his life, writing in the press, speaking on the platform, addressing letters to newspapers published in places as distant as New York and London ! His restless spirit knew no tiring or defeat until he was satisfied he had done his duty by all men in all corners of the globe.

The defeat of the Axis Powers in the Second World War did not usher in peace and harmony among the nations of the world. On the other hand, flushed with victory and forgetting the nobler instincts of man, the Allies vied with one another in their lust for power and world domination. The death of Hitler and Mussolini did not mean the disappearance of Nazism and Fascism from the world. The discovery of the atom bomb by the victors, leading to the horrors of Hiroshima, was the first of a series of more satanic weapons discovered by the Big Powers of the West. And soon a stage was reached when the possession of these engines of destruction became a source of fright to their possessors ! The United States and Soviet Russia were the rivals in this brutal exhibition of might, what with their stock-piling of these bombs, the orgy of nuclear explosions in mid-ocean to test their lethal strength, the newer and newer forms of frightful warfare that defied all canons of chivalry and reverence for human life. No doubt there were negotiations between the Big Powers from time to time to ban nuclear weapons or bring about nuclear disarmament, but as neither side was free from suspicion and fear of the other party, the attempts failed always to bring about fruitful results. Mankind was living on the brink of a precipice, never certain when it would be pushed down into the nether regions, always afraid of the machinations of the Machiavellian rulers of the mighty nations, who seemed to be blind to all considerations of humanity, honour, and the happiness of innocent millions !

Rajaji condemned this callous attitude of the nuclear Powers in frank and forthright language. His soul was in agony at the prospect of the fair earth becoming a shambles because of their

inordinate lust for power. "The Great Powers who have secured this nuclear secret and developed a satanic, anti-God technique based on that secret," declared Rajaji, "have by no law of God or man obtained the right to destroy all the nations of the earth and their achievements through many millenia of evolution. Neither Russia nor America nor Britain nor France has acquired a right to do this. This wicked competition at the expense of mankind must cease. If the UN is powerless to do anything in this respect, it had better be wound up, as an expensive and worthless show. But *it can* bring this wickedness to an end. There is enough of morality and reverence for life left yet. There is power also if only the nations will learn and make up their minds to be brave and sacrifice, and to non-cooperate as Gandhi taught India to do to subdue the pride of Britain without the use of any weapons."<sup>1</sup> Rajaji continued his noble propaganda against the use of nuclear weapons by the Big Powers. "The hope for world survival lies in the total abandonment of nuclear and bacteriological weapons and in the progress towards world law and world government."<sup>2</sup>

He appealed to the Big Powers to heed the warning of eminent men of science and Nobel Laureates like Dr. Linus Pauling and Dr. C. V. Raman. They had declared that unless there was a ban on such nuclear tests, they would permanently endanger and deform life. "Humanity kneels before the Great Powers," said Rajaji "and begs for continual normal life. For when brute force has found science to help it to become omnipotent over all law and morality and conscience, when governments outside the cold war circle, who understand and have the spiritual power to put a stop to this illegal course of the nuclear Powers by resolving to put them out of the pale of humanity and not to take any benefits and arms aid from them, when these neutral governments, I say, are hypnotized and refuse to make a gesture of resistance, what remains for us but to kneel and pray?"<sup>3</sup>

It was the firm belief of Rajaji that world peace could be

1. *Swarajya*, 8 November 1961.

2. *Swarajya*, 25 May 1970

3. *Swarajya*, 16 June 1962.

achieved sooner than world government by the adoption of unilateral action, which he considered as the only panacea under the present circumstances. Its effects could not be seen in a short space of time but it would crown with success the honest endeavours of those who took to it. The way was hard, he admitted, but hope lay at the end of the road when trodden in a spirit of sacrifice and service to humanity. He mentioned how Gandhiji, when he started the fight for India's freedom, was ridiculed and laughed at by many eminent men in his own country and abroad. He stuck to his invincible weapons of truth and non-violence, fused in an ineffable manner into the matchless weapon of satyagraha, and in the end won *Swaraj*. "Unilateral action requires a great deal of courage. It may be described even as a dangerous gamble. There is and there can be no bargaining in love. Love and goodwill forge their own returns. not out of previous agreement or bargain but out of their intrinsic nature. The gamble of the first step, if it may be so called, is based on human nature and will never fail. Unilateral action is a procedure based on the truth that in human intercourse, a step taken in advance by one party and without guarantee of reciprocation from the other side inevitably produces a reaction in the other party. Unilateral action depends on no world organization or Court. It depends on the essential goodness of human beings".<sup>4</sup>

Rajaji did not merely suggest methods of outmanoeuvring the machinations of the men in power in Leningrad and New York, Paris and Peking. He took active part in leading a Mission for World Peace to the United States in 1962. While there he spoke on the platform and wrote in the American Press, explaining the objects of his visit to the American people and appealing to them to raise their voice of protest against the perverse attitude of the Big Powers in their preparedness to expose the world to extinction rather than forsake their foul lust for power. He interviewed President Kennedy at the White House, who was so impressed with the Indian statesman and scholar that he declared, "Rajaji had a civilizing influence on me !"

Rajaji wrote a letter to the *New York Times* setting out the objects of his Mission to America. "I am in the United States

4. *Swarajya*, 5 November 1960.

as a member of the Gandhi Peace Foundation Delegation that arrived in Washington on September 27, 1962 on a mission to try to secure the immediate cessation of nuclear tests. The present deadlock appears to be the result of the Soviet Government not accepting the offer of the U.S. Government to stop all tests in the atmosphere and the sea without any conditions, if the Soviet Government do the same. The Soviet Government has insisted that any agreement should cover also underground tests, over which there is an unresolved difficulty about verification and inspection. It will not consent to make a beginning with an agreed cessation of the tests over which there are no difficulties, as to verification and inspection. The position, therefore, is a needless stalemate in respect of even what could be immediately done to the great advantage of the health of humanity. I feel, under these circumstances, that the one way out of the stalemate is for the United States to take unilateral action, putting its offer into practice and promoting a prohibitory resolution in the UN for the cessation of all atmospheric and undersea tests and calling for a speedy and successful termination of the negotiations over the cessation of underground tests. . . . If it commands massive support in the UN, it is not likely that any member, however powerful, would violate its terms. In any event, I believe that the time has arrived when the moral sense of the peoples of the world should assume a dynamic form and compel the cessation of the continuous contamination of mankind's environment."<sup>5</sup>

Rajaji pointed out that a quarter century of piling up of nuclear arms had elapsed since the end of the Second World War and that the first nuclear Powers, namely, the United States, Soviet Russia and Great Britain, confessed to a sense of guilt at having committed a crime against humanity in their lust for power. They had obtained the consent of most member nations of the UN—only China and France being the exceptions—for a Non-Proliferation Treaty banning the use of what he called "these fantastic weapons". The two Big Powers that hold the largest stock of these lethal armaments, the USA and the USSR, have no trust in the sincerity of each other, though they are aware that such a solemn covenant between the high contracting parties will reduce the risks to mankind at the present time.

In this state of affairs Rajaji suggested the sovereign remedy of prayer to God should be resorted to by the smaller nations of the world. "Again I must revert—when dealing with this most grave matter—to my belief in prayer to the Most High. Arguments I have advanced But these have little chance of convincing people who are steeped in doubt and seized by fear unless God's mercy causes a relaxation of these fears and doubts. Let us therefore pray for this mercy from Above. Men's hearts, the hearts of the powerful men who rule the nations, can be infused with courage and mutual trust only by *Isvara* whose inscrutable power and mind govern the Universe".<sup>6</sup>

6. *Swarajya*, 10 August 1968.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

# The Champion of the Underdog

*Give me the strength never to disown the poor or  
bend my knees before insolent might.*

—Rabindranath Tagore

AMONG the many causes dear to Rajaji's heart which attracted his devotion, the uplift of the lowly and the lost, the friendless and forlorn, found an important place. He was an upholder of social justice to the lower strata of Indian society which, in spite of independence, were still continuing in their abject plight of penury and want, the victims of the sons of Mammon, piteous pawns in the political game of the leaders of the land. The coming of freedom had not meant for them any appreciable improvement in their economic condition or enlightenment in their life. They were still addicted to evils like drink that ruined them body and soul. They were still compelled to live in unhealthy surroundings and fall a prey to disease. They were still poor specimens of humanity compared to the free people of other countries, although their devotion to *Dharma* and their faith in God was higher than what prevailed among the elite of Indian society. It saddened Rajaji to think that the snapping of the bonds of subjection had brought no change for the better in their lives. They were now at the mercy of brown bureaucrats instead of their white masters before liberty was won for them by Gandhiji. The

Father of the Nation had, no doubt, made them free but they had yet to enjoy the fruits of freedom like the richer classes. Mahatma Gandhi had called upon the people to give up drink, to banish untouchability from the Hindu fold and to dedicate themselves to the service of their fellowmen. "Those who serve the poor are great in the eyes of God," he had declared on a memorable occasion. But, alas, the country swarmed with self-seekers who were in power and authority. They made hay while the sun shone, more when the sun did not shine ! Corruption stalked the land like an evil spirit tempting even the most innocent with its prizes and rich spoils. Nepotism played an insidious role in raising men from the dust to roles of distinction. The nations of the world wondered if this was the land of Mahatma Gandhi, the apostle of truth and *ahimsa*, even as his own people wondered if this was the *Rama Rajya* of Gandhiji's dreams ! These aspects of life in India after *Swaraj* were ever present before Rajaji's eyes and pained his innermost soul. He fought to mitigate those evils that had lowered India in the esteem of world nations and had led to the moral degeneration of his countrymen and their rulers.

Mahatma Gandhi considered that the eradication of the drink evil was one of the most urgent and effective steps necessary for the regeneration of the country and the economic prosperity of the masses. With that object he had included prohibition among the principal planks of his political programme for winning *Swaraj*. Drinking is interdicted by all the principal religions of the world—Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Buddhism. Their injunctions in this regard must be implemented by any true follower of these great faiths. Gandhiji was aware of the existence of this pernicious habit among the hamlet-dwellers as well as the members of high society to the detriment of their health and the depletion of their purse.

A realistic picture of the havoc wrought by drink on a poor man's home and family cannot be bettered for its grim truth than these words of Mahatma Gandhi :

"Only those women who have drunkards as their husbands know what havoc the drink evil works in homes that once were peaceful and orderly. Having identified myself with labour, I know what ruin drink has brought to the homes

of labourers given to drink. Drink revenue makes people pay for their own corruption, moral, mental and physical. The loss of revenue is only apparent. The removal of this degrading tax enables the drinker, that is the taxpayer, to earn and spend more ”

Rajaji was in complete agreement with his Master on the urgent necessity of ending this monstrous evil that has at times converted men into animals and incited them to commit the most heinous crimes including murder. When he became the First Chief Minister of Madras in 1937, one of his earliest acts to make life better for the masses was the enactment of the Madras Prohibition Act. Rajaji applied it first to his own home district Salem.

“When I see the bazars in Madras City,” wrote Rajaji in 1972, “studded with blazoned sign-boards of licensed wine shops and young men in small groups encouraging one another visiting these shops, my eyes are filled with tears for what I have brought about without intending it, for I imagine I am not a little responsible for the DMK being in office. Our young men, hitherto totally innocent and ignorant of the allurements of brandy, whisky or wine, are being permanently sold to the Devil for the sake of a trifling addition to the Government revenue ”<sup>1</sup>

The extra revenue derived from drink, argued Rajaji, was as immoral as it was undesirable for it would be at the expense of the poor and their health and their happiness. The justification for the reopening of toddy shops and arrack shops in Tamil Nadu after 20 years’ closure on the ground that it would bring in more revenue to the government appeared to him to be puerile and opposed to all principles of wise statecraft and statesmanship. The welfare of the poor and the prospect of a decent, healthy existence for them necessitated the continuance of prohibition. “Drink revenue is a deceiver, even as the temporary stimulation that intoxicating drinks give is a deceiver. We do not want a revenue derived by opening the flood-gates of wasteful, unhealthy and ruinous expenditure by the poorest families of the nation, who even now do not earn

1. *Swarajya*, 5 February 1972.

enough to meet the cost of normal healthy family life, owing to high prices, which cannot be held mechanically or by force but only by a great change in government policies. What will ruin the people cannot be good for state governments because just a little more revenue can be got out of it.”<sup>2</sup>

What is morally wrong as well as against the interests of millions cannot be a right policy of the government. True that the reformation of the people is not in the hands of the State but government owes a duty to see that they do not put the temptation of drink in the minds of the people leading to debasing habits that work havoc with their happiness in their homes and the harmony of their family life. “Public opinion in India among poor people is in favour of prohibition and will continue to be so in spite of the propaganda of the upper class whisky and brandy bibbers. These upper class drinkers can afford to pay for the liquor they consume and can fairly easily get special permits to waste their money and their health. They are for doing away with prohibition because they feel ashamed to ask for and obtain permits. The difficulty should be removed, they feel, if rich and poor, all were relieved from the Prohibition Law. The shame they feel is an index of the public opinion against drinking, and that makes all the difference between the American conditions which brought about a repeal of prohibition there and the conditions prevailing in India. Prohibition is the one great reform that gives a chance to the poor people to go up in social status and in family comfort.”<sup>3</sup>

The miserable life led by slum-dwellers in cities and large towns made Rajaji take up their cause. The rapid industrialization of India during the twentieth century has attracted millions of people from the villages to the towns to eke out a better existence. This large influx of population has not been provided with adequate housing and other conveniences for a decent and comfortable life either by the government or by their employers. The result has been that though their economic condition has improved, the poorer classes of employees in mills and factories are forced to live in unhealthy and insanitary conditions, devoid of sufficient amenities of civilized life.

2. *Swarajya*, 29 April 1967.

3. *Swarajya*, 2 March 1968.

Rajaji's heart went out in sympathy to these sons of the soil migrating from the villages only to land in slums. "The rural families migrate into the urban centres where they can get better wages, however miserable their living conditions have to be. There is no chance of getting rid of the slums . . . unless the matter is looked into as an occupational problem and not merely a question of replacing palm leaves and old newspapers by brick and cement at government expense."<sup>4</sup> He suggested that adequate work must be provided for the rural population through vast projects like road-making, the building of tanks and reservoirs, and the dispersal of industrial centres to the countryside, so that they might earn adequate wages without crowding into the cities and being compelled to become slum-dwellers

The starting of lotteries by the State in various parts of India, with tempting prizes running into lakhs of rupees, came in for severe condemnation at Rajaji's hands. Instead of making people work-minded and more industrious, these lotteries are a lure to laziness and hold men in their vicious grip. "It is wrong to get poor people's money by tempting them with intoxicating drugs through licensed agents of government; it is doubly wrong to do it by tempting them with the chance of winning a big prize, the odds being one against lakhs—doubly wrong because the government does not give anything in return whatsoever to the lakhs of people who part with their money on this temptation and do not win the lottery, not even a drink. An act which is morally wrong does not become right because the government wants money. Otherwise we could organize plain, forthright robbery on behalf of government instead of taxes sanctioned by legislatures. Getting money through the temptation involved in lotteries is not different from robbery, even as a man who cheats through a trick is no better than a thief. . . . I am convinced that it is evil to turn people's minds all over India to making money by luck and to tell them that if they do not succeed, their luck is at fault, and this is done just when the need of the hour is to stimulate hard work and divert men from the devastating propensity of shirking work and to look to cheating one another. The need of

4 *Swarajya*, 3 July 1971.

the hour is to make men work-minded. Lotteries do the opposite of what should be done.”<sup>5</sup>

“Those who serve the poor are great in the eyes of God,” declared Mahatma Gandhi who had dedicated himself to the uplift of the lowliest and the lost, living amidst them whenever he had an opportunity, sharing their joys and sorrows. Rajaji was moulded after his Master and always pleaded for the improvement of the lot of the poor. He called upon men and women to become interested in their welfare and observed. “Of what use is man’s life if he does not serve those around him?” He condemned the Congress government for heaping too many burdens on the shoulders of the lower sections of the society in the shape of crushing taxation when they were hardly able to make both ends meet. He took up cudgels on behalf of the craftsmen of the goldsmith community when the Gold Nationalization Bill was passed into law by Parliament, depriving millions of these artists of their legitimate profession and driving them to the doors of penury and want. The ostensible reason given by the government for the above enactment was to put a stop to smuggling of gold into India. “If you wish to stop the smuggling of gold into India and can do it, by all means, stop it,” observed Rajaji referring to the Gold Control Bill. “It is indeed monumental stupidity to put millions of honest, skilled artisans out of occupation, because with all your extensive powers as government you have failed to stop somebody’s criminal practices. If you cannot tackle officially defined crime, confess it but do not practise extensive and undeserved cruelty on innocent people to cover up your incapacity to govern. The smuggling is the automatic result of your depreciated currency, and it cannot be stopped by torturing the goldsmiths or any other particular community who have nothing to do with smuggling.”<sup>6</sup>

“An official takes to corruption as a fish takes to water,” observed Kautilya in his famous treatise on politics and statecraft, *The Arthashastra*. The prevalence of widespread corruption in the administration has been accepted on all hands and

5 *Swarajya*, 21 September 1968

6 *Swarajya*, 2 January 1965

the attitude of the authorities seems to be to brush it aside since it is so common all the world over. Rajaji bewailed against the existence of this dark blot on the escutcheon of Indian administration. He recalled the great days when Gandhiji led the country to liberty, fighting on a high moral plane fusing the two ineffable ideals of truth and non-violence into the invulnerable weapon of satyagraha. He ascribed the fall in the standards of purity in the administration and the probity of its personnel to the belief of the Congress rulers that the end justified the means and that so long as success attended their efforts, the motives behind their victorious march need not be taken into consideration! Another reason for the official classes deserting the path of *dharma* was the emphasis laid on making money somehow and enjoying themselves. "The widespread prevalence of corruption is recognised and treated as a malady whereas it is the result of trying to bring into being what calls for an honest profit incentive but without furnishing that condition. A philosophy of love of money is deliberately preached, but no room is given for making money in an honest way and the philosophy or psychology, whatever we call it, finds the way of corrupt practices. . . Production of wealth demands its toll, viz, the profit motive, if we dislike the way of slave-driving. Provided free enterprise is not only tolerated but encouraged and accepted as a decent and legitimate way of rapid and efficient industrialization, and individual business is recognized and respected as a national enterprise and released from the numerous curbs and the impediments now imposed, and if foreign aid is channelled through non-State free enterprise, instead of through government, India and other undeveloped countries can be made to produce much satisfactory results in marvellously quick time. Instead, we seek to reach the goal through State Socialism, cutting out the profit motive, which is essential for sustained human activity. State Socialism is not compatible with free life. It must be accompanied by the compulsions of Communism or Fascism. Our friends who give lavish aid, and are disappointed with the results, blame Sankara and Buddha and the *Rishis*. I plead not guilty on their behalf; the failures are due to wrong

policy, not due to our culture or the *Rishis*”.<sup>7</sup>

Rajaji, however, did not throw up his hands in despair at the prevailing state of affairs in India. On the other hand, the canker of corruption and its concomitant evils could not be got rid of, he admitted, by refusing to confess the reality and becoming silent victims. There was hope for the country if its rulers could shed their fondness for false standards of prosperity and progress aping Western countries, without copying the good in them or their two great virtues of duty towards the country and discipline in their daily conduct. “We must elevate the simple life to the status it had enjoyed in Gandhian and pre-independence days. It is ‘standard of life’ that has corrupted and is corrupting our souls. We should make our administration less expensive by reducing the number of people engaged in that unproductive but important work, while at the same time, paying adequate salaries to those employed. The development of productive industries should be unhampered by controls and by bureaucratic hurdles, so that they may grow quickly and absorb more of intelligent young men instead of their being driven by necessity to government service”.<sup>8</sup>

The *sine qua non* for a satisfactory means of ending corruption permanently and restoring integrity into the administration lies in the inculcation of a high moral purpose into the minds of the official classes. They must be inspired with a feeling that the interests of the country demand their honest performance of their duties and that they must give of their best, in spirit and in letter, for the betterment of their fellowmen and the fulfilment of the highest ideals of probity, efficiency and good government. Public officials must tread the way of righteousness, dedicated to the service of the country, realising that the path of duty is the way to glory. “Less taxation and less inflation, abandonment of the wholly wrong plan of finding industrial capital by oppressive taxation, and release of private capital and private initiative from the barbed wire entanglements of central planning—these will help to a large extent in clearing the air of the poisonous smog of corruption. Human nature cannot tolerate this state of affairs. The crisis

7. *Swarajya*, 23 March 1963

8. *Swarajya*, 4 May 1963



will lead to revolution of some kind, communist or fascist or military. The people have to face this corruption on the one side, and high prices and unbearable tax-levies on the other. Oppression and corruption must lead to revolt, and passing through anarchy, democracy must turn to dictatorship. Neither can the resulting tyranny escape the total evil of the times. The dictatorship will not be a relief for that, too, will be corrupt.' <sup>9</sup> Rajaji concluded that only rectitude of conduct and righteousness of life would save the nation when faith in God was restored.

9. *Swarajya*, 4 May 1963.

## CHAPTER NINE

# The Religious Background

*Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man.*

—Swami Vivekananda

RAJAJI was a deeply religious man with an abiding faith in God. Though he appeared to be engrossed in worldly affairs and spent all his time and energy in the rough and tumble of political life, he had anchored his soul in the Supreme. Like his Master all his activities were motivated by a ceaseless quest of the spiritual. Just as it was an accident that Mahatma Gandhi had strayed into politics, Rajaji had engaged himself from his younger days in the fate and future, the fortune and freedom of his fellowmen. Like Mahatma Gandhi he was in the world and yet out of it, with his eyes ever set for a glimpse of the Beyond. He was the ideal *grihasta*, who never ignored the responsibilities of family life. He fulfilled his duties towards his wife and children but was always in quest of the something beyond life and beyond death, that has baffled the wisest of mankind and has been the end and aim of their existence in their endeavour to merge themselves finally with the Eternal Spirit!

It is accepted by men following all faiths from time immemorial that religion is the pathway to God. There are, no doubt, millions of men who do not believe in the Almighty and who have no faith in the efficacy of religion to lead them towards

a land of bliss where the Omnipotent Creator rules with love over all His creatures. One can have no quarrel with such people for they have missed the path and are struggling alone in darkness and despair, unable to see the Light of God that is manifest everywhere and in everything, whether it is a microbe or a monster, a whale or a vermin, a mountain or man "Religion is essentially faith in the reality of God's rule," says Rajaji. "Through this faith man acquires limitless courage and capacity for suffering and sacrifice. They acquire a sense of equality and the oneness of the human family, and, indeed, the oneness of all life."<sup>1</sup>

Just as men have to depend for food for their existence from day to day, spiritual food in the shape of religion is equally essential for their survival if they are to be differentiated from the mere animals in creation. What distinguishes man from animals is his consciousness that he is a creature far advanced in the scale of evolution from the living things whose be-all and end-all seems to be a meaningless continuance of their species. Men realise that there is supreme purpose in their birth and in their death. "The Universe of matter with its unchangeable laws does not explain itself. That it exists does not satisfy the human mind, although the atheist may refuse to give further thought to it. At that point beyond which reason cannot operate, Faith begins. This is Religion. It covers the ground which science cannot explore. In particular, it gives rise to commandments as to how men should act towards one another and among themselves."<sup>2</sup>

He looks upon atheists as men who refuse to look beyond their noses, as it were. They pride themselves on their defiance of God and God's rule. He looks with horror at the godlessness that prevails among people all the world over today. It is this godlessness that is the parent of the suicidal policy pursued by the Big Powers in their desire to dominate the world, though in the process the whole of mankind may be completely destroyed. He considers this godlessness worse than atheism. Our intellectuals, children of modern knowledge, have not only developed into mere atheists but have also become victims of godlessness with all its grim consequences. "It is this godlessness different

1 *Swarajya*, 3 January 1970.

2 *Bhavan's Journal*, 1 January 1969.

from atheism, which we must cure for all our maladies really result from it. Atheism is passive non-cooperation with their idea of God. Godlessness is not only that but a revolt against the moral rules of conduct that have issued out of all religions.”<sup>3</sup>

Rajaji desires people to realise that men and women come into being because of God, they exist because of God, and their end is ordained by God. He wants them to remember that it is God who moves the working of our minds. It is the mind of man that has enabled him to have the rare power of survival among all created things, supreme and unsurpassed, their lord among all creatures having life. This is not a mere physical capacity to conquer all obstacles and come out triumphant overcoming all trials and tribulations. This incomparable power of man, declares Rajaji, is a spiritual power and a proud privilege not possessed by any other living thing. It may be asked from where this power comes to man, how he happens to be endowed with it, who gave such outstanding potency to man? Rajaji answers in one simple word, as all the wise men of the world have answered: “God!” We may not be aware of His existence but we are conscious of His Omnipotence. “True, we cannot see God; but from that can we say that He does not exist? We see multitudes of stars at night; we cannot see them by day. Does ‘invisible’ mean non-existent? We are finite and limited in our vision and so we are not able to see God. But for that reason let us not say, ‘There is no God’, or ‘There is no need for Him!’”<sup>4</sup>

“The notion that God and Religion are superfluous and can be dispensed with are born out of a state of mind that is itself the product of ages of God and religion. We are apt to be unconscious of what we possess, thanks to our parents and to our society. The sons of a wealthy father may imagine that poverty and unemployment are no problems, and that they are just vices and aberrations, born of idleness. Similarly, we who have inherited certain habits of thought and moral feeling are apt to think that God is a superfluity that can be dispensed with”<sup>5</sup> Rajaji declares that only faith in God and our devotion to Him can sustain us in life.

The acceptance of the idea of God, according to Rajaji, is

3 *Bhavan's Journal*, 1 June 1969.

4,5. *Bhavan's Journal*, 16 December 1956

not utilitarian in concept. The most enlightened scientists of the twentieth century have recognised the reality of the Supreme Being, though we do not know His form. One thing can be asserted, however, God is not like anything that exists or does not exist but which we conjure up in our imagination in our own imperfect way. "The worship of God," concludes Rajaji, "is an elemental necessity of life as it has evolved in man and his mind. It is on a par with the urge for the maintenance of the race and the urge for the preservation of life, like hunger and thirst, and the urge of sex. It is a fundamental of existence and survival, not what can be questioned on the basis of use and utility. Man's survival calls for detachment and therefore for God." <sup>6</sup>

Rajaji's study of the great religions of the world confirms his faith in God. He considers that all religions are but paths to the realisation of God and that the *Isvara* of the Hindus, the *Allah* of the Muslims, and the *Jehovah* of the Christians are all one and the same. They are different names given to the Divine Being by their followers. "Hindu religion like other religions is the worship of God. The special characteristics of Hindu religion are that it respects other religions and holds that worship offered by people following other religions through whatever forms of words or rites bears good fruit just as worship in accordance with Hindu religion." <sup>7</sup>

The great historian, Dr Arnold Toynbee, observes that Hinduism is unique among the historic religions of the world in its breadth of view that Truth is not the exclusive interpretation of Hinduism or any other religion. In the twentieth century with its great achievements in science, that seem more to be a menace to humanity than a blessing, men may adopt the doctrine of Hinduism that all paths lead to God, viewing it from an utilitarian angle of thought. Even this outlook on the need for accepting the existence of the Omnipotent Being is right teaching and gives us a true vision of reality. "In the Hindu view, as Dr. Toynbee has rightly emphasised, every one of the religions of the world is a true vision and a right way. Each has a special spiritual value for the people who have developed it. To know

6. *Bhavan's Journal*, 16 December 1956

7. *Swarajya*, 5 June 1971

this is good but it is not enough, says Dr. Toynbee. Religion is not just a matter for study, as Hindu scholars are apt to think. Truth is something that has to be experienced and to be lived.”<sup>8</sup>

Rajaji was a devout follower of Hinduism. He made a deep study of its philosophy as contained in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and other classics of Hindu thought as interpreted by saints and scholars down the ages like Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya as well as realised souls like Gautama Buddha and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, Ramana Maharishi and Mahatma Gandhi. Hindu religion is based on a ceaseless quest for Truth reared on a solid foundation of belief and faith in the existence of a Supreme Being. It has in it a rare blend of philosophy and practical life that makes it an incomparable heritage for its adherents. “The Hindu doctrine of all ways leading to God with the resulting attitude of the Hindu creed towards all other religions, is unique. No other creed has arrived at this all-embracing fraternity of faiths which Hinduism stands for. Judaism, Christianity and Islam do not give room for this doctrine of universality. In religious thought this universal validity is as great a discovery of truth as the law of gravitation in the realm of physics. Let us not give up this precious possession in a desire to copy others who claim exclusive possession of truth. Even in its conception of the Supreme Being, Hinduism differs from other monotheistic creeds in that Hindu philosophy places the Supreme Being above the rule not only of Space and Time, but also of numbers. He is one and He is innumerable, *Asankeyah*, not subject to the law of numbers.”<sup>9</sup>

The *Upanishads* are the quintessence of all religions in which is expressed the eternal yearning of the human soul for realizing immortality after a cycle of numberless births and deaths. The cry of men all along, as conveyed in the *Upanishads*, has been :

Lead me from the unreal to the Real,  
Lead me from darkness to Light,  
Lead me from death to Immortality!

- . Swarajya, 5 June 1971.
- . Swarajya, 27 November 1971.

"The principal teaching of all the *Upanishads* is this: Man cannot achieve happiness through mere physical enjoyment obtained through wealth or through other goods of the world, or even through the pleasures attainable by elevation to the happy realms above through performance of sacrifices that are prescribed in the *Vedas*. The only happiness worth a wise man's seeking is permanent happiness as distinguished from fleeting pleasures that are exhausted by enjoyment like a credit account in a bank either here or in the world beyond. . . . *Jehovah, Allah* and the God of the New Testament may well be made the central name-piece of the teaching of the *Upanishads*, and the sense of it would remain unaltered. Pious men of all religions should indeed study the *Upanishads* and the *Gita* in that very manner, to whatever faith they may belong, only substituting their accustomed name wherever the Supreme Being is referred to."<sup>10</sup>

To Rajaji God is a reality, whether He is seen or unseen, whether men have belief in His existence or deny Him. The poet Wordsworth called duty or *dharma* "the stern daughter of the Voice of God." Rajaji avoids this intermediary between Man and his Maker, giving no importance to the role. When a person is hesitating to do some wrong act, an inner voice, generally called conscience, comes between the wicked thought and its fruition. Conscience is the whisper of God that prevents a person from straying from the right path and should be listened to as against the call of the baser self in man. God is necessary for life, by whatever name He may be called; He is within all men like the blood in their veins. "Call Him by the name of Conscience if you like," Rajaji says, "but He is there speaking from your heart in spite of yourself." Conscience is not a phenomenon of schizophrenia or split personality but is God whispering to us. Let us listen to Him as Socrates did in Athens and as Gandhiji did in our country, in our own age. Listen to the Deity in your heart who speaks to you when you need Him. Appeal to the God in your brother's heart when you wish him to change his ways."<sup>11</sup> Rajaji concludes by saying that not only is God always with us but if we do not shut our doors against Him, He

10. *Hinduism: Doctrine and Way of Life* by Rajaji, p. 38, 41.

11. *Swarajya*, 4 September 1971.

will keep us company always and speak to us if we do not plug our ears against Him.

Then comes the question in the mind of every human being: "What is the form of God?" Rajaji quotes from the Hindu Scriptures that God is unseeable and has also a clearly seen form. He is the infinite material Universe itself. His form is nothing like anything else known to man or unknown. Modern scientists can only contemplate God in terms of a hypothesis but God cannot be the subject of a mere hypothesis, asserts Rajaji. On the other hand, the history of civilization down the centuries conclusively proves that God is the source of all morality, the bedrock of all spirituality, the basis of all the culture which is the true wealth of mankind.<sup>12</sup> "The First Universal Cause, *Ishvara*, *Allah*, God, as it is variously called, has transformed itself into this Universe that we see. The Universe that our senses perceive is therefore an *avatar* of *Ishvara*, *Allah* or God whom the sages of all religions ardently desired to see but deplored they could not. The paradox is put in the shape of two names given to the Lord in our *Sahasranama*: *adrisya* and *vyakta roopascha* in the same verse, one following the other, unseeable and also clearly perceivable."<sup>13</sup> 17817

The aim of all men is not mere material prosperity or enjoyment born of sensual pleasures but something higher. After all is said and done, Man, being the monarch of all creation, should aim at something nobler than sheer animal existence summed up in living without any objective and dying without any achievement worth the name. There is a purpose in life beyond worldly advancement, namely, the realisation of spiritual wealth which is incomparable with anything man can acquire. There is a denouement in death, once a man has worked out his *karma* and has shed all the earth in him and become a pure soul, a part of the Eternal Spirit pervading the Universe. This exalted peak of perfection can be reached only by devotion. "Truth and devotion are the only means to reach God. If we forget God, we shall die. Without devotion we cannot truly live. For Devotion and Truth together make up wisdom. To bring God into one's own heart needs no great learning. Devotion will

12 *Swarajya*, 4 September 1971.

13 *Bhavan's Journal*, Annual Number 1965.



suffice. Devotion is the root of all religions. If there is real devotion in a person, his religion will serve his needs. Without devotion one cannot attain wisdom through religion or through conversion to other religions ”<sup>14</sup>

Rajaji is catholic in his religious outlook and feels that all faiths are equally effective for man's realisation of his supreme goal in life. The quest for God is like the thirst of a wanderer in a desert; he must find an oasis and quench his drouth, otherwise he will perish. Hence those who yearn for a glimpse of God will not search for some new religion to satisfy their soul. A man whose earnest desire for God is overwhelming will seek the Omnipotent by following his own religion. “If we believe that God is everywhere,” sums up Rajaji, “why should we not believe that He is in objects to which so much concentrated devotion is attached? Christians believe in the doctrine of original sin Hindus believe in the doctrine of acquired sin. But all of us believe that God, by whatever name we call Him, is in the world. When we say that all ways lead to God, we do not mean only that we respect other religions. It is also implicit in that statement that most people find their way to Him most easily along the path which they are taught to tread as children. You know that the English Christian, C.F. Andrews, came through his association with Gandhiji, to accept the fundamentals of our faith; yet when he died, his outlook had changed again, and Christianity appealed to him more than anything else. Similarly, among our sects, it is the Vaishnavite symbols that appeal to me most ”<sup>15</sup>

Rajaji mentions that the two great source-books of Hindu Religion as embodied in the doctrines of *Vedanta* are the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. He compares the modern methods of scientific enquiry and investigation to the insistence on Truth and a ceaseless quest for the same as expounded in the *Upanishads*. The Sovereignty of the Divine is explained in the *Bhagavad Gita* in a manner that overcomes the questions of modern science when pitted against the problem of religious cosmology. The *Bhagavad Gita* declares that Divine Sovereignty is exercised through the inexorable laws of nature. “A study of

14 *Ramakrishna Upanishad* by Rajaji, p 85

15 *I Meet Rajaji* by Monica Felton, pp 38-39.

the *Upanishads* will show that the *Vedanta* postulates that the Universe is the result of a gradual unfolding of the creative power inherent in the primordial substance. In fact it may be said that the philosophy of Hinduism anticipated the basic theories of biology and physics."<sup>16</sup>

A study of the Hindu religion and its philosophy convinced Rajaji that the need of the present times is *Vedanta*. For the foundation of *Vedanta* is a feeling of oneness with all humanity, its welfare and happiness "The Vedantin is a citizen of the world," asserts Rajaji, "and a soldier in the world's army in a totally non-martial but no less heroic war against evil, the more heroic since he seeks no personal reward."<sup>17</sup> Those who have sought real enlightenment in the realms of the spirit have been most bewildered by the beauty of the Universe, far beyond the achievements of twentieth century science. They find no satisfaction in following faiths that have stopped further progress after passing a certain limit of intelligence and illuminating the soul "The mysticism involved in the Vedanta relates the good life to truth and science. The conflict between religion and science is replaced and healed by harmony and integrated thought. . . Vedanta has a contribution to make to enduring civilization. No polity based entirely on exploitation or force, even though it is administered by able and well-intentioned men, can last or be elevating even during the period it lasts. Vedanta offers a religious faith that can have no quarrel with the scientists who work in the laboratory or with the geologists who do research in the history of the physical world, and yet it offers a firm spiritual foundation for the just polity of a new world."<sup>18</sup>

Rajaji sums up his supreme faith in God and his own philosophy of life as to the working of the Universe by its Great Creator in language that mirrors the ecstasy of his soul at the contemplation of the Divine. "The Supreme Power has arranged things so that they go on by themselves. He does not intervene. He has transferred all power to the things themselves. It is a grand and perfect scheme of decentralization. He is ever working and yet He is not seen to be working. The machinery works

16. *Swarajya*, 3 August 1968

17 18 *Hinduism : Doctrine and Way of Life* by Rajaji, p. 94.

by itself once it started. We that observe and are curious, sceptical or credulous, we too are all parts of this Great Machine. We cannot get out of it and look through the windows into the Engineers's residence or workshop. This is the predicament of man, who is himself the most wonderful part of the Universe. It is not surprising, therefore, that some men say the machine is all automatic and there is nothing else, that there is no Engineer. The very smoothness and efficiency of the working of the machine leads to this notion."<sup>19</sup> Only a man of Rajaji's spiritual attainment could soar to such a splendid vista of the Unseen Architect of the Universe!

Prayer played a great part in Rajaji's life, as is often alluded to by him in his writings. We are all God's children, he says, and we must approach Him as a child approaches its mother. It is said that we should be God-fearing. No doubt it is true. But God-fearing does not mean that we should fear the Almighty just as we are afraid of a tyrant. The simple idea behind the phrase "God-fearing," declares Rajaji, is that we should not break the commandments of religion and be afraid of the consequences that it brings in its wake. If we approach God in all humility and lay bare our hearts to Him as a child does to its father or mother, He will come to our doors and keep us company. But if we close our ears, we cannot listen to His whisper

It is possible for a man to have a vision of God if he keeps his heart pure by meditation. If it is polluted by lust or greed, God cannot be seen. "Our hearts are like mirrors. If they are pure and clean, they will help us to see God. Greed and anger are not easily got rid of. If we cannot quite get rid of them, we must turn them in a direction where they will not be so mischievous. Lust after God. Turn your desires and power into the quest for God. Turn even your anger towards God! We tame wild animals. We bring under control even an elephant and make it obey us. Our mind, too, can be tamed and controlled if we make the effort. Wisdom is the goad with which we can bring the mind under control."<sup>20</sup>

Just as he insists on the importance of *dharma* in a man's life

19. *Bhavan's Journal*, 6 August 1971

20. *Ramakrishna Upanishad* by Rajaji pp 81-82.

and the necessity for fulfilling its injunctions, he feels that devotion to God or *Bhakti* is the *sine qua non* for realising the Supreme. A man need not be learned in order to instil faith in God into his life. His devotion to God will lead him to heaven. "Truth and devotion are the only means to reach God. If we forget God, we shall die. Without devotion we cannot truly live. Devotion is the root of all religions. If there is real devotion in a person, his religion will serve his needs. Without devotion one cannot attain wisdom through learning or through conversion to other faiths" <sup>21</sup>

An assessment of Rajaji's personality will not be complete without a reference to his reiteration about the need for men to render selfless service to others. "Of what use is a man's existence if he does not devote himself to the service of his fellow-men?" His whole life was a saga of service and sacrifice for his country and his countrymen. He laid his rich talents at their feet and laboured for the lowliest and the lost. From a freedom fighter against the British rulers of India, he transformed himself, after it had attained independence, into a fighter for securing the fruits of freedom to the masses, denied by those in power. Authority did not daunt him, power did not corrupt him, for *dharma* was his lode-star and truth his shield invulnerable! He may not have achieved all that he aspired for. But he was always a *Stitha-pragna* and could say in all humility: "I am not a sage nor a saint. I am a humble believer and that is all, and I wish to speak the Truth. I speak about my personal experience. Whenever I have keenly felt the distress of others and I pray for their relief, I have found God has answered. I say to others confidently, pray for *others*, and God will surely relieve their distress and take care of you without your asking for it. If our concern is truly about other people and not about anything for oneself, God will help." <sup>22</sup>

21. *Ramakrishna Upanishad* by Rajaji, p. 85.

22. *Swarajya*, 18 March 1972.

## CHAPTER TEN

# A Devotee of Dharma

*Stern daughter of the Voice of God !  
O Duty, if that name thou love,  
Who art a light to guide, a rod  
To check the erring and reprove.*

—Wordsworth

ACCORDING to Rajaji *dharma* is the highest moral law, it transcends the bounds of time and space, it is accepted as applicable to all men of all creeds and all climes. Man-made laws may differ from each other, they are amenable to change according to circumstances and the concepts of men down the centuries. But *dharma* is of divine origin, it is the message of God to man at all times, eternal in its import, everlasting whatever things may perish, as immutable as the Infinite.

“Man may not see God,” says Rajaji, “but *dharma* is the link between man and God.” In other words, *dharma* is the visible manifestation of the Immanence of God, moving the minds of men, working in their lives for their good, leading them towards the end that is destined for them by their *karma*. Mahatma Gandhi looked upon Truth as God. For he declared<sup>1</sup> that men may not know what God is but truth they cannot deny. *Dharma* is the mighty and many-splendoured manifestation of truth, it is the vesture of eternal wisdom woven out of the thoughts and *tapas* of the ancient *rishis* of India. Its fulfilment:

ensures the happiness of human beings, leading them to Heaven !

“Justice is an inviolable natural law which is to be discovered, not created by man through laws and regulations,” observes Rajaji. “Justice has its origins higher than the State. It is this that provides inherent rights to the individual and to minorities. It is the Law of Laws and is called *dharma* in the Hindu books. A tyrant may take and exercise all power. A Parliament may be invested in a democracy with all law-making power. But kings, dictators and parliament should feel restricted by *dharma* and act accordingly. This is modern wisdom and consistent with Hindu tradition.”<sup>1</sup>

Rajaji was of the view that the basis of civilization in all countries and at all times is *dharma*. Whichever people and whatever nation fulfils its duty to man and God can be deemed to be governed by a *dharmaic* polity. Work is worship and every civilized government has recognized the principle that the fruits of a man's labour should not be taken away from him. In other words, the property belonging to him, having been earned by the sweat of his brow, should be permitted to be enjoyed by him, other men and the State. “Every man is worthy of his hire,” says the Christian gospel and as a corollary, every man has the indubitable right to the possession and enjoyment of whatever he has acquired by his labour. “Without the recognition of the sacredness of property, there can be no ordered society,” declares Rajaji, “no freedom, no incentive to work, no progress, no civilization. Therefore there is guaranteed in the Constitution of India the right of every citizen to work, to acquire property, and to hold and enjoy it without let or hindrance by any person, and last but not least, freedom from appropriation by the State without payment of adequate compensation. This is in consonance with the modern concept of the right to property and its enjoyment, guaranteed by all democracies like England, France and the United States.”<sup>2</sup>

A staunch believer in the divine destiny of man, Rajaji called upon everyone to follow *dharma* and fulfil its injunctions. “What doth it profit a man,” asks Jesus Christ, “if he gains the

whole world but loseth his own soul?" These words of wisdom find true echo in Rajaji's concept of *dharma*. "A man without *dharma* is like one moving in darkness," asserts Rajaji. "He is without light and will end in damnation of the soul." To him *dharma* is light, *dharma* is life, *dharma* is limitless joy. The meaning of the word *dharma* is all-comprehensive and connotes the duty of man to all living creatures, the duty of man to his fellowmen, the duty of man to God.

It was this three-fold aspect of *dharma* that made Rajaji condemn the practice of vivisection and killing of animals for the purpose of scientific research so-called. He did not disguise his disgust at the recent developments in that direction, by which the lives of men are saved and preserved as long as possible at the expense of the excruciating misery of animals. "It is true that the progress of science in dealing with human health depends to a certain extent on experiments to be made on animals. But there is a limit beyond which surely the interests of speculative science should not be carried. War is justified by tradition but limits are laid on the barbarity that is permissible. So also there is a point beyond which cruelty cannot be practised simply for testing speculative ideas that may remotely be of possible use in relieving human suffering and pain."<sup>3</sup> This exemplifies his faith in the ancient teaching: "*Ahimsa paramo dharmah*" : *Ahimsa* is the highest *dharma*, which was one of the cardinal principles that shaped the life and thought of his Master, Mahatma Gandhi. It may not have been possible for Rajaji to follow the above principle so strictly as Gandhiji did but he always avowed his allegiance to it and did not swerve from it in action.

His concept of the duty of men towards their fellowmen found concrete expression in many ways. He fought for the rights of men in its various aspects. He fought for the right of India to freedom shoulder to shoulder with Gandhiji and his noble band of *satyagrahis*. He fought for the rightful place of untouchables in Hindu society as equals to their other brethren who followed Hinduism. He fought for the rights of the under-dog for justice and humane treatment at the hands of capitalists, who made their millions out of the toil and tears of the poor labourers

employed by them. Lastly, he fought for the dignity of man and the recognition of his individuality when he started an Opposition Party to the ruling oligarchy that had entrenched itself in what seemed perpetual power, flouting the fundamental rights of the citizens inscribed by the Founding Fathers in the Constitution as an imperishable legacy to the people of India. From a freedom fighter against the British rulers of his country, he became an inveterate and dauntless fighter for the freedom of his countrymen during the last twenty years of his life, denied by those in power and authority. History does not afford another example of a great and good man going all out to wage a moral war against the embattled strength of his own countrymen, drunk with power, deaf to all calls of honour and honesty, driving in pomp and glory in their caravan over the starving bodies and stifled souls of millions, who were flesh of their flesh, bone of their bone !

All this Rajaji did because of his boundless faith in the invincible strength of *dharma* and his incomparable devotion to *dharma*, whatever the consequences. But his noblest efforts were in the direction of world peace and harmony, calling upon the nations of the West to give up their vile lust for power in order to dominate the world. The end of the Second World War in May 1945, preceded by the horrors wrought by the atomic bomb on the twin cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, was but the beginning of an arms race between the Big Powers of the West, namely the United States, Soviet Russia, England and France. They engaged their scientists to discover and perfect more lethal weapons by which the lives of masses of men could be destroyed quickly without having to undergo the doubts and agonies of prolonged warfare till now experienced by warring nations. The result was the piling up of nuclear weapons secretly and cornering all the scientific knowledge available till then to create more deadly weapons. Right from the commencement of this recent and unhappy era in human history, Rajaji protested against these nefarious activities of the Big Powers which he foresaw would end only in the destruction of all that is precious in human civilization and culture built down the centuries. He carried on a ceaseless campaign for putting an end to this nuclear rivalry and for nuclear disarmament

“We may not know about God but *dharma* is the connecting.



link between Him and us," says Rajaji to satisfy the incredulity of agnostics who have no faith in *dharma* or its potency. He cites the example of the sun as the giver of light and life to all created things, though we may not inquire into the nature of the sun or its dimensions "So did Buddha think that we may not seek to investigate or philosophise over God, but he laid all the greater stress on *dharma* for that very reason."<sup>4</sup> Rajaji gives a stern warning to men that if we should ignore both God and *dharma*, we shall have to face worldly ruin and damnation of soul. After all, we should remember that we are all instruments of God and it is He who gives us victory if we follow *dharma* and live up to its ordinances, as laid down by our ancient teachers.

*Dharma* is based on ethical principles that are true for all time. They are eternal as the sun and the stars and govern the destiny of all men, whether they have faith in the Divine or not. Men may neglect morality, thinking that it is useless but they forget that life does not lie in throwing to the winds the eternal wisdom enshrined in *dharma*. "*Dharma* alone is good. *Dharma* alone is happiness, skill and wealth. If *dharma* declines, a country cannot prosper and everyone will become poor."<sup>5</sup> So he calls upon men and women as well as nations to fulfil their *dharma*, which is divine in origin and does not depend entirely on reason.

Being an active politician and a man of public affairs, Rajaji's eyes took note of everything, every incident, big and small, that was happening in the country. He felt sad at the sight of his countrymen falling in moral standards from the heights of glory and dignity to which Mahatma Gandhi had raised them in their days of struggle for freedom. He called upon Indians to bring back to India the moral grandeur it had reached during the days of her fight for emancipation under the marvellous leadership of Gandhiji.

From the individual to the nation is the next logical step that Rajaji insists on as necessary for achieving moral advancement and enhancing the prestige of the people as a whole. One Mahatma Gandhi cannot make up, declares Rajaji, for the

4. *Swarajya*, 26 November 1966.

5. *Bhavan's Journal*, 15 April 1973.

moral degeneration of India's administrators as a whole, who have been disavowing the great principle of truth of which he was such an incomparable exemplar. On the twin wings of truth and non-violence Gandhiji reached heights of glory and won freedom for his people. His followers, however, seem to find no need to adopt those exalted ideals in their governance of India. These ugly facts saddened Rajaji beyond measure during his lifetime and he drilled into the ears of those wielding authority that they should not forsake their duty as rulers. The *dharma* of government is to govern justly and with care for the welfare of the nation. The *dharma* of the Opposition is to criticise the government justly and with care for the welfare of the nation. Both Government and the Opposition should fulfil their respective *dharma*. Without *dharma*, Government is a sham and an evil—an infliction and a danger instead of being a protection.”<sup>6</sup>

Rajaji then takes us from the national plane to the international plane regarding the observance of *dharma* and its guidance for the destinies of the people. During his long and purposeful life filled with many remarkable and rare achievements, Rajaji had followed the course of history, especially during the twentieth century, and had been a witness to the rise and fall of nations. He mentions about the rise to power of Hitler brushing aside all canons of *dharma*, destroying nations, depriving innocent people of their freedom, denying the eternal principles of morality in a mad career for power and all, to what purpose? Hitler built up a name for himself as one of the most hated of the world's conquerors, earning the curses of millions of men and women, ending in disgrace and dishonour.

From the dawn of history there have been wars but *dharma* kept its ground all the same, as Rajaji truly remarks. After the defeat of Hitler and the Axis Powers, the nations of the West forgot the old international laws of war. “Warfare and *adharma* became synonymous,” observes Rajaji. “The discovery of nuclear weapons increased the lust of the bigger nations to dominate the world as was noticed in the attitude of the United States, Soviet Russia and others towards the weaker countries of Asia and Africa. Power grew on the back of science and soon it

assumed a monstrous, frightening size and quality . . . A great movement for *dharma* must be started and developed in the Orient. Science and money power must be spiritually confounded with a new kind of rivalry—a rivalry in *dharma*. For *dharma* is shield and fortress as well as sword impregnable and invincible. The nations of Asia and Africa should not lose time or faith or courage but must stake everything on *dharma*. They must rise to complete the unseen mission of the Atom, which was to dethrone physical power by leading it to a dizzy height. Afro-Asia must undertake to place *dharma*, the true and only sovereign, on the throne. Afro-Asian nations must do this, not only for their own good but to save the world from physical destruction as well as moral disaster. India should take the lead in this necessary but bold venture; but lead in humility, which is *dharma's* essential aspect and greatest force.”<sup>7</sup>

Truth is the keystone of the Arch of *dharma*. The great exemplars of truth known to mankind are Socrates in ancient Greece and Harishchandra in Indian legend. Socrates drank the hemlock cup rather than forswear his allegiance to truth. Harishchandra gave up crown and kingdom, wife and child, happiness and home in his incomparable loyalty to truth. Within living memory, Mahatma Gandhi gave battle to the British rulers of India with truth and non-violence as his invincible sword and shield and considered his life a series of experiments with truth. This Titan of the twentieth century in his quest for God ultimately contemplated the infinite qualities of the Creator of the Universe as being summed up in one supreme sentence of enlightenment “Truth is God”. All these great men reveal to us the unique and remarkable place that truth holds in the lives of men for all time, whether they know what God is or not.

A superb summing-up of Rajaji's analysis of what is *Dharma* and *Bhakti* has been recorded and has been preserved for posterity in his talk on what is “God-fearing Life” given as a gift along with the “RAJAJI 93. Souvenir” published on the completion of his 93rd year. The following is Rajaji's talk.<sup>8</sup> “As gravitation is the most important and the greatest force in the material universe, so is love the greatest and most important

7. *Swarajya*, 21 March 1964.

8. “Rajaji 93. Souvenir” p. 220H.

force in the world of Spirit Love is true prayer and true prayer is love. 'God-fearing' is a prevailing phrase, but I do not much like it. It is fear of sin, fear of *adharma* that is sought to be expressed by this phrase, it is not God we need fear, we should fear sin. *Bhakti* is Love, not Fear. God divided Himself, the one, into many. And great was the force that issued, pulling them to one another again. Thus was Love born, and the joy thereof. Left to this, they would have soon come together and the play would have ended So was hatred conceived and anger. The many sometimes pulled away from one another, so that the joy of coming together may be repeated and multiplied indefinitely. Hatred is often indistinguishable from love, good from evil. There is a hidden law in all this, but we see only a few links at a time, not more. Evil, hatred, jealousy, and so on, are all contrivances to increase joy.

There are no sweeter lines of poetry in any language than the following from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*:

He prayeth well who loveth well  
Both man, and bird, and beast;  
He prayeth best, who loveth best  
All things both great and small  
For the dear God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

# Interpreter of Indian Culture

*Culture is "to know the best that has been said and thought in the world"*

—Mathew Arnold

RAJAJI was not a mere professional politician who sought to acquire power and enjoy the plums of office. One of the exalted ideals of his interesting life was the interpretation of Indian culture. His deep study of Sanskrit and its classical literature like the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gita* and other books of Hindu religion and philosophy, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* enabled him to imbibe the essence of the wisdom and culture of ancient India. A scholar of English literature who delighted in the dramas of Shakespeare and the political philosophy of Bacon and Burke as well as modern writers and savants, he could speak and write with authority on the varied aspects of life. Gifted with a mind of encyclopaedic range, he gave to the world a rare feast of information and knowledge clothed in felicitous language, that shows what a remarkable mastery of thought and expression he possessed in his public life of over half a century of action and achievement. His writings on all subjects from the *Bhagavad Gita* to birth control are interspersed with illuminating passages that interpret Indian culture and make fascinating reading. They abound with quotations from Kalidasa and Keats, Valmiki and Vyasa, Thoreau and Tiruvalluvar, Shakespeare and Shankara,

Mahatma Gandhi and Ramana Maharishi, giving ample proof of his catholic taste in ancient and modern literature of all countries. His books and lectures serve as an education in themselves and the reader is presented with a panorama of life and thought down the centuries, giving us glimpses of his extraordinary mind and the depths of his profound passion for delving into the mystery of the Unknown.

It may be difficult to define the word "culture" but the culture of a nation is generally understood to consist in certain comprehensive aspects of their life and activities that reveal their contribution to the literary, artistic and spiritual wealth of mankind. The culture of a nation consists in the ideals that have inspired its people to immortal action down the ages and is deemed to be made up of its dreams and its deeds, their adventures in quest of the Supreme and for a true knowledge of the Divine. A country in the course of its history may be invaded by hosts of barbarians often but its glory and greatness in the fields of human effort and experience, its culture and civilization will live for ever. Among the most renowned nations of ancient times India has survived with its civilization and culture untouched by time, unaffected by the vicissitudes of violent onslaughts on its way of life and thought, with its eyes unperturbed and serene ever turned towards the Eternal !

What amounts to culture is borrowed by Rajaji from the *Kural* of Tiruvalluvar, one of the classics of Tamil Literature whose author was one of the wisest men of all time, comparable to Socrates and Marcus Aurelius, Confucius and Buddha. His definition of culture as delineated by a man of culture is as simple as it is sublime :

Do not be mean; be noble, be large-hearted. Do not be false; be honest always and in everything; detest dishonesty, keep away from it as from offal. Do not be cruel, show tenderness towards every being that is weaker than yourself. Every loving thing loves its own life and is sensitive to pain as you are. Every being, be it child or girl or dog, or man or woman is sensitive to pain; be tender to them all. If you are mean, false or cruel, everyone will know it and know you are not a cultured person. Do unto others as you would be done by.

This is the essence of culture in thought and action.<sup>1</sup>

Even as Mahatma Gandhi addressed prayer meetings to large masses of his own people almost every day of his later life, Rajaji gave lectures on the life and thought of India down the ages. His wide and varied reading of the ancient literatures of Sanskrit and Tamil and the modern writers in English from Shakespeare down to the present day enabled him to gather wisdom and disseminate it in unstinted measure to men and women who came to hear him or read his articles in the press or peruse his books. He made it a part of the mission of his life to bring to the knowledge of the common man the rare treasures of thought and radiant philosophy left by the ancient sages and *rishis* of India, in order that the masses may realise that they are the inheritors of the immortal legacy which they should not tarnish but render it more glorious and resplendent. Rajaji considered that this work on his part was more important than the role he had played under Gandhi's leadership in bringing India to the threshold of freedom. According to him,

The best service I have rendered to my people is the retelling of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. This has been a source of great joy to me in the evening of my life. It is good to be a political and national worker and to take office and work hard. But I have seen that it is better to be able to leave it and enjoy the company of the sages of our land and to help them to speak to our men and women again.<sup>2</sup>

With this objective Rajaji spent a great deal of his time and energy, away from the din and tumult of politics, in rendering into English the great Indian epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. A great scholar in Tamil and a profound admirer of Tiruvalluvar, he translated the *Kural* into English and revealed the wealth of its wisdom to the present-day readers. His desire to interpret the wisdom of the world knew no bounds of creed or clime. He translated the works of Marcus Aurelius

1. *Our Culture* by Rajaji, pp 7-8 (Quotation from his translation of the *Kural*)

2. *Bhavan's Journal*, 7 January 1973.

into Tamil and showed his countrymen the richness of mind of that remarkable Roman Emperor. Sankaracharya's *Bhaja Govindam*, considered by Rajaji as containing the quintessence of his thought, was rendered into English as forming part of the philosophy of India. Paying a tribute to the unknown author of the *Bhagavat Puranam*, he marvelled at the humility of a man who left a gem of rare quality to the world but kept himself in the dark as to his identity or importance in the age to which he belonged. "Humility is an essential part of true culture," he remarks, "as mentioned in the *Gita*."

Rajaji's *Mahabharata* in English is not a mere translation of that classic, which depicts lofty delineation of character and deeds of heroism of men and women different from the ordinary mould of humanity. He says :

"My *Mahabharata* is not a translation but a condensation. Is it any wonder, after I have lived so long, that when I go into a jungle, I can cull the most beautiful flowers? I am fortunate to have been given the time to be able to do it. The real value of many of the stories is that they show us that great and good men can do bad things and that even the best of men cannot be virtuous all the time."<sup>3</sup>

Rajaji considers that the *Mahabharata* belongs to the world and not only to India. It is a classic of world literature like the *Bible* and the *Bhagavad Gita*, the works of Valmiki and Vyasa, Kalidasa and Kamban, Shakespeare and Milton. Like other classics, the *Mahabharata* gives us unalloyed pleasure for all time, elevating our souls above the trivialities of earthly pursuits and the trifles of daily existence, and whispering into our ears, "the unbroken Voice of God, the Eternal Watchman and Friend". And to the Indian people down the ages it is a perennial fountain of spiritual strength. "The characters in the epic move with the vitality of real life . . . The *Mahabharata* discloses a rich civilization and a highly evolved society which, though of an older world, strangely resembles the India of our times, with the same values and ideals . . . The *Mahabharata* has moulded the character and civilization of one of the most



numerous of the world's people. How did it fulfil—how is it still continuing to fulfil—this function? By its gospel of *dharma*, which like a golden thread runs through all the complex movements in the epic, by its lesson that hatred breeds hatred, that covetousness and violence lead inevitably to ruin, that the only real conquest is in the battle against man's lower nature."<sup>4</sup>

The men and women represented in the *Mahabharata* makes the reader feel that he may meet them in real life as one walks in the streets of twentieth century India. We meet in the immortal epic the venerable Bhishma, the perfect knight, who gave up his right to a crown in order to please his father and make him happy. Therein is depicted Dronacharya, the great master of archery who trained Duryodhana and his wicked brothers, having a soft corner for his only son Aswaththama and whose death was brought about by a subterfuge. Karna, the eldest son of Kunti, reveals his noble character by his rare fidelity to his masters, the Kauravas, refusing his mother's appeal to espouse the cause of his own brothers. Duryodhana, whose soul is inspired by a devilish desire to destroy the Pandava brothers, meets a well deserved end at the hands of the mighty Bhima. The five Pandava brothers have become models of integrity and intrepid bravery on the battlefield—Yudhishthira, the matchless devotee of *dharma*, Bhima with the strength of a giant who destroyed the vile Keechaka for his foul design against Draupadi's virtue, Arjuna the peerless warrior whose prowess on the field of battle was never surpassed by any hero in the legend or history of India; Kunti, the blessed mother of five sons who brought her glory and renown, Draupadi, who braved the brutal attempt to dishonour her in Duryodhana's Court by her dauntless faith in Lord Sri Krishna and Sri Krishna Himself giving to Arjuna and the world His immortal message in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Where else in the world's literature can we find such examples of extraordinary men and women, far from the multitude and towering above all mankind like Himalayan peaks? Rajaji sums up the greatness of the epic in these words

Learnt at the mother's knee with reverence and love, the *Mahabharata* has inspired great men to heroic deeds and also enabled the humble to face their trials with fortitude and faith. It is a noble poem possessing in a supreme degree the characteristics of a true epic, great and fateful movement, heroic characters and stately diction. One can even read a translation and feel the overwhelming power and incomparable vastness and sublimity of the poem. If a foreigner reads this book—translation and epitome though it is—and closes it with a feeling that he has read a good and elevating work, he may be confident that he has grasped the spirit of India and can understand her people—high and low, rich and poor.<sup>5</sup>

Rajaji had few peers among intellectuals of present day India though he spent his life in the political field having joined the freedom fight at the imperious call of Mahatma Gandhi. His knowledge of Sanskrit and Tamil was equal to his mastery over English. He translated the classics of Indian thought and wisdom, bringing enlightenment and delight to millions of readers. His original writing in Tamil were his outstanding contribution to its modern literature. His parables and short stories in Tamil contain the essence of his wisdom and experiences garnered from his wide study of world literature from Marcus Aurelius to Machiavelli, John Bunyan to Julian Huxley, Radhakrishnan to Bertrand Russell. Rajaji had as profound a reverence for the *Bible* as he had for the *Bhagavad Gita*, considering them both as containing the quintessence of the world's philosophy. He was imbued with the wisdom of Socrates as well as that of Sankara and admired the political acumen of Francis Bacon and Edmund Burke. He admired the consummate art of Shakespeare and delighted in his dramas considering the Bard of Avon supreme in his sphere. His taste in literature was truly catholic and he sought to interest his countrymen in the perennial treasures of the philosophy of the prophets of mankind—the unknown seers of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, Gautama Buddha and Jesus Christ, Zoroaster and Mohamed, whom he deemed to be divine

5. From Introduction to *The Mahabharata*.

messengers sent down to earth to deliver the message of God to men.

The essence of Indian culture, in the estimation of Rajaji, is its exaltation of the ethical side of human existence focussing the end and aim of man's life in the quest for the realisation of the Supreme. A nation's progress lies in its ability to enthrone moral values among the masses as well as the classes. Thousands of years ago the *rishis* and sages of India laid stress on a man's spiritual endeavours as the *summum bonum* of his life as against the acquisition of material wealth. The survival of man depends on his faith in the supernatural governance of life and the acceptance of certain cardinal principles of probity and virtue. "We can no more survive as a species without this faith than we can dispense with the atmosphere of the planet, and hope to survive. The faith and the values emanating from that faith are part of our evolutionary history as the oxygen in the atmosphere of our physical life. We cannot dispense with faith unless we are prepared to destroy ourselves or become quite a different kind of living beings."<sup>6</sup> The advance of civilization depends on the acceptance of the existence of God and the acknowledgement of His Supreme authority. The Hindu scriptures have described God as unseeable and also as a clearly seen form. We see the form of God in the infinite material universe itself, if proof were needed of His existence. We cannot afford to give up this faith in God, for civilization rests on it. Mankind has grown up by climbing this ladder of light and cannot kick it down, lest its disappearance from our midst plunges us in illimitable darkness and despair. God may only be a hypothesis to the modern scientist but the civilization of centuries has shown that God is the living seed of moral values. Civilization is not only material progress but is the prevalence of respect for moral values. These values are man's special inheritance, without which advance in influence or power is not civilization."<sup>7</sup>

The insistence on the implementation of *dharma* is the keystone of Indian culture. The fulfilment of *dharma* is the foundation of all success in life and in the effort to reach man's divinely destined end. "*Yato dharmah, thatho jayah!*"

Where there is righteousness, there is victory!" says the ancient Indian scripture. The two great Indian epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, teach us that where there is a fall from *dharma*, ruin quickly pursues the man pitilessly to his eternal doom, whether it was Ravana or Duryodhana. *Dharma* rules the world and the lives of men whether they believe in it or deny it, for *dharma* is nature. Just as man is ruled by *dharma*, Government also have to accept the superiority of *dharma* in exercising their authority over those under their rule. Government floats in a sea of *dharma*. Without *dharma* Government is a sham and an evil, an infliction and a danger instead of being a protection."<sup>8</sup> *Dharma* may not be put into practice by all men and women in their daily life. But they must have reverence for *dharma* and be afraid of breaking its injunctions, although they may fail in their efforts to follow it. For, the fulfilment of *dharma* by individuals will raise the moral level of the nation as a whole and evoke respect for its character from the whole world. "According to India's *dharma*, all the wealth, talents and good luck of which an individual happens to be the possessor, come from God and he holds them as a trustee for the benefit of those around him. Giving is the biggest employment one can extract out of one's possessions. There should be no legal compulsion intervening in the working of this moral trusteeship. Giving ceases to be enjoyment if it is subjected to coercion."<sup>9</sup>

Rajaji considers that the genius of India is her spirit of toleration which she has exhibited right down her history. That is also the secret of the survival of Indian culture and civilization for the past five thousand years or more while other countries and civilizations have been destroyed by the tornado of time. The culture of Greece is a mere memory, the glory that was Rome is a relic of the past, the mighty empire of the Moors in the Middle Ages is but a chapter in the history of mankind. Only India has withstood the ire of her conquerors and their scant respect for things of art and beauty, worshipping the spirit and turning her back on all that is transient and ephemeral, ever in quest of the Eternal! This is because her

<sup>8</sup> *Swarajya*, 23 March 1963.

<sup>9</sup> *Swarajya*, 28 May 1966

moral glory has overcome all her hostile invaders who ruled over her but were never able to hypnotize her mind or conquer her soul. They have been absorbed in her all-embracing arms of toleration becoming part and parcel of her innumerable family, growing in diversity with the passing of time. "Hinduism is the only religion that specifically includes in its doctrine that all ways lead to God. This catholicity in Hinduism is unique. Other religions do not seem to go so far as does Hinduism in this respect."<sup>10</sup> Dr. Arnold Toynbee observes that Hinduism is unlike any other world religion in holding that truth is not the exclusive representation of Hinduism. "In the Hindu view every one of the religions of the world is a true vision and a right way. Each has a special spiritual value of its own for those people who have developed it. To know this is good, says Dr. Toynbee, but it is not enough. Religion is not just a matter of study, as Hindu scholars are apt to think. Truth is something that has to be experienced and to be lived, and this is the field in which Sri Ramakrishna has manifested the uniqueness of Hindu thought."<sup>11</sup>

The essence of the *Bhagavad Gita* is explained by Rajaji in easy language which enables an ordinary man to elucidate its meaning and fulfil its injunctions in every-day life. This great classic of Hinduism has been the subject of erudite commentaries by men like Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya in the past, Tilak and Aurobindo at the present day. Mahatma Gandhi, among his multifarious activities, found time to give his own interpretation of its profound thought and practical wisdom. Rajaji explains the essence of the *Bhagavad Gita* as follows.

"The *Upanishads* and the *Gita* contain the way of life which by tradition has been accepted by the people of India. What does the *Gita* teach us? Every moment our thoughts and actions shape our future. As a result of each thought, which we entertain and dwell on and each act we commit, we become pure or impure, good or bad, more and more restrained and capable of self-control or less and less so and slaves of evil urges. Every moment we shape our character.

10. *Swarajya*, 15 November 1969.

11. *Swarajya*, 5 June 1971.

as a goldsmith shapes his jewels on the anvil, each stroke of his hammer corresponding to each thought, word and act of ours. Therefore it follows that by self-control, enlightened thought and action we can free our souls from evil and improve ourselves . . . . The *Gita* tells us how to secure tranquility in the midst of all work. Tranquility cannot be secured by taking *Sanyas*<sup>12</sup>. It can be secured only by detachment and by placing our trust in the Lord in all things. Do your work not thinking of success or failure or what results are to be reaped by you by that work. Throw the burden of results on the Lord when you do the work. This is the way to keep the soul clean whatever may be the work one may have to do. The butcher in the *Mahabharata* is a famous example of this teaching.”<sup>13</sup>

It was Swami Vivekananda who first opened the eyes of the West to the enlightened teaching of the *Vedanta*. He created a sensation when he first appeared at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. His ochre robes and his outstanding personality became the cynosure of all eyes in that distinguished gathering and he conquered the West with his interpretation of India's ancient wisdom and philosophy. It proved to be the beginning of a brilliant saga of a spiritual invasion of America and Europe by the “Hindu Monk From India”. It has been followed since then in more and more centres being opened there for the spread of the culture and civilization of India and the creation of a yearning in Western minds for understanding the soul of India and exploring the unknown realms of its renaissance religion, Hinduism. A great admirer of Swami Vivekananda, Rajaji expounds the philosophy of *Vedanta* in a direct and forceful manner, reminiscent of the most renowned disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Rajaji poses the question and answers it himself: “Is it possible at this stage of human history to build a religious fabric around scientific truth as it has evolved and is still evolving? *Vedanta* is the answer. It is not necessary to build a new religion. In India we have a religion and a philosophy attached to it, as old as

12. ‘Sanyas’ means renunciation of the world

13. *Bhavan's Journal*, 6 August 1961.

civilization itself which is remarkably consistent with science as well as politics.. . Put in precise words the claim is that a code of ethics and a system of values were evolved by the Hindu philosophers out of the religious philosophy known as *Vedanta*, which is not only consistent with science, but is also admirably suited to be a spiritual basis for the most just and stable social organization that good people all over the world desire and are working for.. . It goes without saying that spiritual values proposed as the basis of a sounder social organization must not be an improvisation or an invention of expediency designed to further material interest by cloaking it with sanctity. A spurious scheme of the so-called spiritual values to serve a sordid purpose would be a delusion if self-imposed, an imposture if offered for acceptance. Honesty is the best policy, but it is not as policy that honest conduct was made part or continues to be part of every religion. Similarly, *Vedanta* is bound to help regulated economy but it is not for that reason that it was conceived or should be accepted as a faith.. .

"The *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita* are the source-books of *Vedanta*. It is a remarkable achievement of intellectual imagination—it would not be correct to call it inspiration—that the rule of law in science was anticipated in the ancient Hindi scriptures. The God of *Vedanta* is not an anthropomorphic creation with human capriciousness and desire for power—a conception against which the veriest tyro in modern science can launch a successful attack. Divine Sovereignty is explained in the *Bhagavad Gita* in a language which anticipates and meets the difficulties that modern science raises against religious cosmology. According to the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Sovereignty of God is exercised in and through the unchangeable law of cause and effect, that is, through what we call the laws of nature...

"All culture in India has been rooted in *Vedanta*. Whatever courage, heroism self-sacrifice or greatness is to be found in our history or seen in the lives of our people has sprung from *Vedanta* which is in our blood and tradition. It is in the air, so to say, of India and of Asia. The foreigner has to get it from books and he necessarily sees so much subtlety in it that he may well swear that it is impossible that such a doctrine

could ever be the actual cultural basis or living spiritual principle of the daily life of any people of modern times. For, *Vedanta* is undoubtedly a living philosophy of life in India, a part of the mental structure of our people. The people of India get it not from a study of books but from tradition. The greatness of Gandhiji and the strength of his movement were entirely derived from and rooted in *Vedanta*. However much foreign civilization and new aspirations might have affected the people of India, this spiritual nutriment has not dried up or decayed or changed. The lives of the rich as well as of the poor, of the leisured classes as well as of the peasants and labourers, of the illiterate and not only of the learned, are in varying measure sustained and sweetened by the pervasive fragrance of this Indian philosophy. Paradoxical as it may seem, even communities deemed dishonest and disreputable have evolved a code of honour of their own, and are Vedantins to the extent of sincerely respecting it. This curious moral enclave in sinful lives touches the heart and makes a great piety of what is doubtless just a matter for sheer reprobation."<sup>14</sup>

Rajaji reminds the reader that there is all over the world a wave of enthusiasm for regulating the work of the individual in the interests of society. There is therefore a need for creating a social conscience in men combined with a cultural desire to contribute to the common good of all by fulfilling one's *dharma* or duty leading to a spiritual quest. This cannot be achieved by the enactment of any number of Acts of Parliament. "The spiritual value of things depends on the price paid for them in terms of suffering and sacrifice. An easily achieved revolution has not the same psychological virtue as one paid for in blood and tears. Where there is no backing of revolutionary fanaticism or its after-effects, there must be found something else to operate as motive power. The only thing that can do this effectively is a faith that operates as a law from within and co-operates with State-imposed restraints. In *Vedanta* we have a teaching rooted in immemorial tradition and associated with the sacred names and memories of a long line of seers, which can serve as the spiritual and cultural basis for a new and more just economy of life, if not all over the world, at

14 *Hinduism: Doctrine and Way of Life* by Rajaji, pp. 35-36.



least in India itself”<sup>15</sup>

“Vedanta is not mere philosophy.” Sums up Rajaji “It is both philosophy and religion. Yet there is no controversy in it about form and worship Vedanta is the common heritage of the people of India whatever denomination they may happen to have been brought up in.”<sup>16</sup>

Rajaji often gave a spiritual tone to his writings and made an appeal to men and women to follow *dharma*. Though he dealt with every-day problems of political life in India and the world, he raised his ideas to a pinnacle of elevated thought. He based his philosophy of life on ethical principles that are eternal and the common legacy of all the great religions of the world. The result is that he elevates the reader to an atmosphere that inhibits all ideas of transient glory and impermanent achievement. He impresses upon people the power of prayer and the significant part it plays in the shaping of their daily lives for their good. “I have come more and more to believe in the efficacy of earnest prayer I feel that all good men throughout the world should pray to the Most High for the restoration among mankind of trust in one another’s words and pledges. Most of the nations involved in this crisis are those who have accepted the message of Christ. They maintain great churches and cathedrals where they periodically reaffirm their homage to Christ. But the people of that vast country, Russia, do greatly still maintain their faith in Christ, though the government of Russia may have discarded Christ. Everyone now sees what will surely follow if Christ is discarded. It will be the same if Confucius or Mohamed or Buddha or Sri Krishna or Sri Rama goes We want mutual trust again to rule the conduct of mankind as a species desiring to survive. We want to save ourselves from self-destruction Be it Christ or any other Divine Messenger or Reverend Teacher that nations have accepted and honoured, we must bring all these divine leaders of men back into power if we do not wish to be doomed to destruction, and what is even worse living in unending fear until that day of annihilation.”<sup>17</sup> It is Rajaji’s firm belief that

15. *Hinduism: Doctrine and Way of Life*, pp 35-36.

16. *Ibid*, p 40.

17 *Swarajya*, 3 August 1968.

the moral crisis through which the world is passing can only be solved for the good of mankind by going back to the good old days when the prophets commanded reverence from the common man and their words were looked upon as a message from the Divine, and followed by the people in their daily lives in a spirit of holy adoration and humble acceptance.

Rajaji was intensely proud of his country and his countrymen, its heritage of ancient culture and civilization, its emergence as the leader of Asiatic and African nations by its unparalleled feat of winning its freedom without the use of force or violence under the guidance of a man of God, Mahatma Gandhi. Again and again he reminds the reader how India has kept her soul radiant and serene accepting the challenges of chaos and confusion in the course of her history and triumphing over time and circumstance down the centuries, because of her ceaseless search for spiritual light amid the evanescent things of earth that tempted other nations and toppled them to their doom never to rise again ! He attributes this supreme position of India in the world to her unswerving adherence to moral values and her quest for things of the spirit, turning her face away from the lure of the world and a transient life of low materialism. He often emphasises that eternal values should be enthroned in the hearts of men as worthy of their effort and endeavour in terms of the *Upanishadic* prayer.

“Lead me from the unreal to the Real,  
Lead me from darkness to Light,  
Lead me from death to Immortality!”

But his patriotism does not blind him to the faults and foibles of his countrymen that have cropped up after they attained their independence, namely, the corruption in the administration, the callousness of the rulers to the welfare of the common man, the suppression of moral values in an ape-like pursuit of the material prosperity of Western nations. He poses the question why there should still be falsehood and dishonesty in the life and thought of the people and answers in telling words and true:

Our country has attained freedom. We have a Republican

form of Government. Our country holds an honourable place among nations. .. In spite of all this, why do we still behave like beggars and cheats? Why do we believe that falsehood and dishonesty are ways to prosperity? Why do we act like mean people who live on garbage? Without realising the greatness of *Bharata Mata*, why do we basely degrade ourselves? Let us spurn and leave behind the qualities belonging to our old bondage, and let us quickly assert our real, honourable nature. Poverty is nothing to be ashamed of; but littleness of heart and mind is. We may live honourably in poverty. Let us not be bad men. May we cherish the new-won glory of our motherland. Let us discard the mean, cowardly qualities of falsehood and dishonesty.<sup>18</sup>

18. *Bhavan's Journal*, 18 March 1972.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

# Eminence as a Writer

*The man who writes about himself and his own time is the only man who writes about all people and about all time.*

—George Bernard Shaw

EDWARD FITZGERALD, one of the eminent literary figures of the nineteenth century in England, translated into English *Omar Khayyam* written by the immortal tent-maker of Persia in the eleventh century. Till then no one knew of this great poem, which was immediately hailed as a classic of world literature. Even so Rajaji has revealed to men the rich treasure of Tiruvalluvar, *The Kural*, by translating it from Tamil into English. His other outstanding rendering into English are *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana* as also *The Upanishads* and *Bhaja Govindam*, which have been appreciated by millions of readers in India and abroad. Writing of John Morley in one of his inimitable essays,<sup>1</sup> A.G. Gardiner, considers him as being a “double first” in that he had achieved distinction both in English literature and political life, and compares John Morley to another great English writer and statesman of the eighteenth century, Edmund Burke. If Gardiner had written about the great Indians of the

1. *Certain People of Importance*. by A.G. Gardiner, p. 143.

twentieth century, there is no doubt he would have with equal appreciation enumerated the "double firsts" of Indian politics and in the mastery of English letters Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajaji. For, Rajaji achieved fame of the highest order in both the fields of statesmanship and letters along with his great Master and his distinguished contemporary

Rajaji considers *The Kural* as not only a world classic but also looks upon its author as among the noblest and wisest of mankind "Tiruvalluvar ranks with Confucius, Marcus Aurelius, and Buddha and others of that class 'Tirukkural' or 'Kural' without the honorific prefix 'Tiru' is Tiruvalluvar's book. It is one of the oldest extant Tamil works. It is generally accepted as belonging to a period anterior to the second century A.D. Some scholars place it in the first century B.C. Tiruvalluvar was one of those rare and great men whose catholic spirit rose above all denominations and religions, and whose vision was not clouded by dogma or prejudice of any kind. His approach to moral doctrine is marked by a very thorough knowledge of human psychology and a desire to help men with practical hints in the struggle against evil. Throughout his great work we can see how the poet and saint brings everything down to the level of practicality but without losing hold of the ideal. Tiruvalluvar like all other Indian saints did not believe that statecraft and *dharma* could be separated. The well-known doctrine handed down from the *rishis* is that *artha* and *kama* should ever be associated with *dharma*. If dissociated, the hunt for *artha* and *kama* would be sinful. And Tiruvalluvar was no dissenter from this ancient doctrine. The characteristic beauty of Tiruvalluvar's style has been recognised by all Tamil authors and scholars as consisting in its precision and brevity of expression." Rajaji paints in simple language a penpicture of this great Indian of the early Christian era and his profound philosophy. His rendering into English enables those not conversant with Tamil to appreciate this masterpiece of ancient Indian thought and wisdom

The *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* wear a new garb in Rajaji's hands. As he observes, the *Mahabharata* is a condensation in English that has enabled millions of readers, ignorant of the Sanskrit language, to enjoy its varied fare of incidents and stories, its radiant tapestry of thought and wisdom, its rare

galaxy of men and women so different from the common run of humanity. Rajaji depicts in his own language the valourous deeds of the great heroes who have made this epic a masterpiece of portraiture, revealing to the reader a world of valiant men and virtuous women besides saintly souls whose quest was the Eternal although they spent long years like other men on earth.

In his Introduction to the *Mahabharata* Rajaji says: "The realities of life are idealized by genius and given the form that makes drama, poetry or great prose. Since literature is closely related to life, so long as the human family is divided into nations, literature cannot escape the effects of such division. But the highest literature transcends such regionalism and through it, when we are properly attuned, we realise the essential oneness of the human family. The *Mahabharata* is of this class. It belongs to the world and not only to India. To the people of India, indeed, this epic has been an unfailing and perennial source of spiritual strength. Learnt at the mother's knee with reverence and love, it had inspired great men to heroic deeds as well as enabled the humble to face their trials with fortitude and faith. . . . The *Mahabharata* is a noble poem possessing in a supreme degree the characteristics of a true epic, great and fateful movement, heroic characters and stately diction. The characters in the epic move with the vitality of real life. It is difficult to find anywhere such vivid portraiture on such an ample canvas."

The *Mahabharata* gives us an unforgettable picture of life as lived by people when India reached the zenith of its culture and civilization. In it we see the soul of man soar into the empyrean in quest of the Eternal, the majestic sweep of his mind as he scans the universe for an answer to the mystery of life and death. Therein we get a glimpse of god-like men and gracious women whose glory was their conquest of their baser desires, transmuting them into the dreamland of truth, beauty, serenity. Where shall we find such philosophic flights of the spirit of man into the Unknown, un baffled by failure, undismayed by disaster, unruffled by defeat?

Rajaji drew the inspiration for his life not only from the ancient *rishis* of India, whose wisdom is stored in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita* and from the ideals

and life of his Master, Mahatma Gandhi, but also from these two classics of Sanskrit literature, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. "The *Mahabharata* strengthens the soul and drives home—as nothing else does—the vanity of ambition and the futility of anger and hatred. One may tour all over India and see all things but one cannot understand India's way of life unless one has read the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, at least in a good translation . . . A word or phrase about Hanuman, Bhima, Arjuna, Bharata, Sita conveys to us in India, learned and illiterate alike, a significance all its own. . . . In most Indian homes, children formerly learnt our mythological stories as they learnt their mother tongue at the mother's knee; and the sweetness and sorrows of Sita and Draupadi, the heroic fortitude of Rama, and the loving fidelity of Lakshmana and Hanuman become the stuff of their young philosophy of life."<sup>2</sup> His exquisite translations into English of these classics of ancient Indian literature brought delight and wisdom not only to the intellectual classes but also inspired the minds of the common folks.

Rajaji was as great a scholar in English literature as he was in Sanskrit and Tamil. His reading ranged from the *Bible* to the mature wisdom of Francis Bacon and the mystic poetry of Francis Thompson's *Hound of Heaven*. Again and again he intersperses his writings with apt quotations from the Elizabethan statesman and philosopher as well as from the writings on politics of Edmund Burke for both of whom he had great regard. The greatest English scientists, too, from Sir Isaac Newton to Sir Julian Huxley enriched his mind, though he dissents from their scientific theories leading to the mystery of the Unknown without forsaking his unshakable faith in the Divine. His greatest admiration is, however, reserved for Shakespeare of whom he writes with a fervour, rarely surpassed even by great critics after a life-time study of the Bard of Avon. "Every literary creation must be purposeful and this applies to fiction, the favourite form which present-day literature takes. Now there are critics who decry didacticism in stories; their objection is valid. But this does not rule out purposeful writing. What is objectionable didacticism and what is purposefulness

2 From Introduction to the *Mahabharata*.

which is good and necessary? There is in true literature both the elements of artistry and purpose. The purpose is not presented obtrusively in the form of polemics or direct preaching but is worked through characters into the plot and situations created by the artist. We see this most vividly in the plays of that most consummate of literary artists—Shakespeare. Every one of his plays—the great plays particularly—holds a supreme moral purpose. Yet, it is expressed through personalities and their actions, not through explicit preaching. We are gripped by the hand, so to speak, and taken through all the steps leading to crime or noble sacrifice. We are among men and women throbbing with life. New fiction can be of this type or be just moral disquisitions thinly covered by *dramatis personae*. This latter is not literature but mere propaganda. Who can object to the purposeful plays of Shakespeare, which we read without ever tiring and which certainly are true literature? Every one of Dickens' stories or Thackeray's, too, can be put on the table, so to speak, and dissected and examined, and we shall find purpose running in them and moral and social objectives; but the objectives are transmuted into literature and not presented as something not much removed from propaganda. These great writers did not write for amusement or excitement only, but for what they conceived to be a moral or social purpose. But they knew how to do it. They avoided didacticism and used the highest art of dramaturgy in their work."<sup>3</sup>

A great lover of the English language and its great literature, Rajaji urged on the government and the people of India the necessity of its retention for all time so that its vast treasures of thought may be a continuous inspiration to Indians for generations to come. He does not consider it as a foreign language for language has no borders within which to confine itself. He calls upon professors of English in the Indian universities and their constituent colleges to guide the students in the reading of as many good books outside their text as will give them a sound knowledge of English. "One's ambition should be to be able to say, 'I have read so many of Dickens' novels. I have read so many of Scott's novels, so many of Robert Louis Stevenson, so



many plays of Shakespeare etc.,”<sup>4</sup> In his opinion the continuance of English is absolutely necessary for the progress of India.

Rajaji's reverence for all the great religions of the world is revealed by his assessment of the greatness of the *Bible*. Often does he refer in his writings to the sayings of Jesus Christ who has been a source of inspiration in the lives of hundreds of millions of people both in the East and in the West. He condemns the crucifixion of Christ as one of the tragedies in the world's history, being a heinous crime committed by a massive majority. “There are very few books that one really needs to read. If one has the *Bible*, it is enough. With the Old and the New Testaments we have the richness of two different civilizations. The Old Testament was all that the Jews needed, and they were really very much like us in their standards of conduct and in their customs and taboos. Of course, they were not vegetarians but their food habits were based, like ours, on principles of hygiene that still need to be observed in hot countries today if health is to be properly maintained. And they had the same respect for learning as we have, and similar standards of scholarship. I have always been sorry that I read the *Bible* too late for it to influence my style. I still like to read it from a text set out in the traditional way, in verses and in two columns.”<sup>5</sup>

His power of description is nowhere more fully evident than in that exquisite little classic of his life in prison during the non-cooperation movement, *My Jail Diary*, which is a record of his experiences for one year in 1921-1922. He goes into a mood of nostalgic memories as one day he hears the hooting of a locomotive engine as he was at evening prayers. His thoughts go back to beloved partner of his young manhood whom he had lost early in life, in spite of his having personally nursed her with utmost love and devotion during her last illness. “I was pushing away from my mind,” he records in his diary on 19 January 1922, “as trespassers, the thoughts that came up each time the familiar whistling of the railway train passing by came across the prison bars. But today, as I was at my evening prayer, the sweet music of the village *Nagaswaram* that came from some happy home in the hamlets lying outside

4 *Swarajya*, 3 February 1968.

5. *I Meet Rajaji*: by Monica Felton, pp. 135-136.

the prison wall, brought with it such an irresistible rush of happy recollections that I could not for long get them out. The music of these pipes is to me, and I suppose to every man and woman in this land, a sound that brings on its back a world of sweet recollections, a *vahana* of happy youth, of joy and hope. As I let myself wander for a moment in this happy dream-world, I could not resist my tears. Yet God has not spared of His good things for me. Love immeasurable has been my share from my wife, family and friends and all but who can be satisfied and say, it is enough? These thoughts render me weak. All my strength is needed for battle, and I cannot afford to let my mind wander thus into the garden of sweet flowers that yield only tears. All that I shall say to my God is, if she is anywhere and is still subject to pain and pleasure, keep her happy and free from pain and sadness; and give me strength to endure and perform my duties.”<sup>6</sup>

In another entry he severely criticises the attitude of the loyalists who carried on their normal daily life in spite of the fact that thousands were facing horrors in jail. “It is after I am locked in at 6 P.M. and my cell barred, bolted and locked and the key taken away, that the full vision of freedom daily comes to my mind. Why do not people realise the fact that the nation is locked and imprisoned like this not at 6 P.M. but every hour, day in and day out, so that it is one long night of slavery?”

Rajaji was endowed with an intellect of a superior order which enabled him to interpret the most abstruse philosophy of Hinduism in the language that any layman can understand. Take this example of what is meant by *Vedanta*, which he explains as: “The *Gita* which expands and explains the ethic of *Vedanta* emphasises that the activities of the world must go on. We should so act that thereby the world improves in the coming generations. The *Vedanta* ethic is not for the advancement of the individual but of the world as a whole, advancement in the best sense of the word. The world is peopled by ourselves reborn and so there is an intimate connection between our spiritual improvement and the future of the world. We leave conditions behind for posterity, not

only in the environment, but according to the doctrine of rebirth we decide the character of the future population by our thoughts and acts. Like good people who plant trees for their children, we should work to improve humanity by improving ourselves for future births, even though there may be no continuity of memory and identity of personality. Otherwise, the world cannot become progressively better as we all desire it should.<sup>7</sup>

"We have seen with our own eyes the progressive improvement of livestock and the health of men as a result of care and attention bestowed even in one generation. What we have seen in the physical world applies to the minds and souls of men also. If the postulates of *Vedanta* are accepted, the Vedantic ethic is spiritual eugenics. The object of right living to a Vedantin is two-fold : one's own true happiness and one's contribution to a better world irrespective of disconnection in memory when we are reborn. The appeal of *Vedanta* is based on a feeling of oneness with the world and responsibility for its future. Social and civic co-operation permanently benefits the town or the village wherein one is a citizen; patriotism benefits the future generations of the country to which one belongs; *Vedanta* seeks the welfare of the future world of which we are the present builders. If we live detached and dedicated lives as *Vedanta* lays down, the world will be peopled by better men as time goes on. It is after all, a comparatively selfish pleasure that would come of a memory of personality in rebirth. A soldier in the army does not wish to know the names and particulars of the people who will benefit by his bravery and death. The Vedantin is a citizen of the world and a soldier in the world's army in a totally non-martial but no less heroic war against evil, the more heroic since he seeks no personal reward."<sup>8</sup>

An encyclopaedic mind was the gift of the gods to Rajaji. His writings display not only versatility of subject-matter but also depth of scholarship. There is something simple and sublime about his style that reveals to us a man of rare culture. Even in the course of his writings on political affairs, what

7. *Hinduism Doctrine and Way of Life*, pp 86,88

8. *Hinduism Doctrine and Way of Life*, p 94

delightful pen-pictures he draws of the men and women he had known, of the great personalities who had played a dominant role in shaping the history of the world, of matters and things that have inspired him!

The same qualities of mind and thought, clearness of understanding and perspicacity of expression, colour the speeches of Rajaji whether he speaks on religion or politics, culture or civilization, social service or uplifting the underdog, communism or corruption. The reader is conscious of a rich literary radiance that lights up his soul and elevates him into a higher region of exalted ideas that are evidence of Rajaji's superiority of intellect. Speaking on the occasion of the Birthday Celebrations of Mahatma Gandhi on October 2, 1947, he says of his Master: "We are meeting this morning in worship of the pillar of peace, for the living soul of Mahatma Gandhi is truly our pillar of peace. God sent him to us seventynine years ago to become our pillar, our only sheet-anchor, our true rudder. . . . The fathers of our religion gave us compassion, pity and understanding. In the name of religion we have abandoned compassion and are killing innocent men, women and children. All grace, all compassion, all culture seem to have fled, leaving only overwhelming fear of one another. In this great and terrible depression there is only one lamp left burning, as bright as ever—Mahatmaji as a man."<sup>9</sup> Rajaji seems to go into ecstasy when he thinks of his Master; his love for Mahatma Gandhi is so powerful and passionate that no panegyric is too great for him; his recognition of Gandhiji's rare excellences and radiant personality makes him feel as if he is in the presence of the Divine. For, Rajaji calls Mahatma Gandhi the *Matsya Avatar* of our age!

A profound believer that all created things are a revelation of God, he reminds us that we have to approach the mystery of Universe with a feeling of awe and reverence. "When we see a dragon-fly hovering above the swift-running stream, or a little flower on the gardenwall, we see God and nothing else. It was this that the *Rishi* in the *Upanishads* explained to his pupils in that beautiful chapter, which those who have read the *Upanishads* will remember. When you put a tiny seed into the soil and see

the tree coming up with its branches, and spreading its fragrance, beauty and colour, you see God and nothing else. When Tennyson sang of the little flower, he too saw God in that little flower. A little flower is as much a part of the mystery as are the great Himalayas and a small clay image is as much a part of the big mystery as the greatest monument on earth. It is our faith and our strength of spirit that can reach God, either through a clod of earth or when we stand before the Himalaya. All forms of worship lead to the same mystery. Our forefathers showed great wisdom when they taught that every form of worship leads to God and that we should not, therefore, quarrel over the difference between forms.”<sup>10</sup>

This realization of the oneness of life and the presence of the Supreme in all things, big and small in creation makes him refer to trees in another speech. With a touching tenderness he emphasises the absolute need for the preservation of trees amidst human surroundings. “We all know that trees are living creatures. There is nothing more beautiful in the world than a living tree. It is as sinful to deprive a living tree of its leaves as it would be to seal the mouth of a growing child to prevent its breathing. We must be as tender to trees and plants as we are to our children. Not only have plants life, but I may assure you that they are God themselves. That is why we worship the *Tulsi* plant, the *Aswattha* tree, the *Neem* tree.”<sup>11</sup> A tree planting ceremony by the Governor of Province is not for him a mere ritual but an occasion for him to express his thoughts on the mystery of life and God’s manifestations in myriad forms of microbe and monster, tree and flower, man and mountain. His speeches contain passages of rare beauty and reveal him as a man who sought to probe the mystery of the Universe that has baffled the wisest men. His intense appreciation of nature and its ineffable loveliness make him stand in awe before the presence that used to disturb in a similar manner the soul of that great lover of nature in English literature, Wordsworth.

Rajaji’s literary gifts enabled him to etch in exquisite prose the famous men and women whom he had known as fellow

10. *Rajaji’s Speeches*; Vol I, p. 23.

11. *Rajaji’s Speeches*, Vol I, p. 24

fighters for India's freedom. He could also delineate with a few deft touches of his pen the great personalities of the past who had left an indelible impression on his life and thought. They bring before the reader's mind the remarkable traits in their character or their achievements in particular fields of human activity. If he had devoted himself to the writing of books, he would have made a name as a great world writer of today. As it is, his contribution to the difficult task of interpreting India's ancient culture and civilization has won laurels from readers of his many books. He succeeded in this field as few scholars with high academic distinctions have done. All this was because he was a passionate lover of his country and his people; he was always optimistic about their great future. He was ever reminding his countrymen that the gods would never forsake the descendants of the great *rishis* who gave to the world the incomparable treasures of thought and spiritual wisdom contained in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*.

Among the wise men of ancient times he considers Socrates supreme. "The *Crito* and *Phaedo* gave me my first acquaintance with Socrates. All the books that have influenced me most were accidental finds. I suppose it would be right to say that Socrates was the most important. Was there ever a man who spoke with such wisdom? Was there ever a man who understood things so clearly? Was there ever a man who died so bravely or for a better cause? And Rajaji observes in another context that Socrates was condemned to death by being made to drink the hemlock cup by a massive majority of Athenians! When he speaks or writes about his Master, Mahatma Gandhi, he goes into raptures and becomes ecstatic at the contemplation of his greatness. As long ago as the 25th October 1956 Rajaji had made this entry in his scrap-book: "Others have thought, I myself have thought, the things that Gandhiji thought, sometimes even before he ever put them down for others to read. But the power that enabled him to do what he thought came from Above. So it is I consider him one who had a commission from God, an *Avatar*!... Gandhiji was happy when he was suffering for the sake of other people. All saints are like that. He was made unhappy by the bad things he saw going on around him but not when he was suffering for the causes in

which he believed. When good people suffer they feel that they are expiating something. They believe that God is punishing them for sins that they have committed in their past lives . . . . Truth waited like a vigilant spy on Gandhiji and his inner voice always spoke to him in sure though soft tones. Gandhiji lived and worked on no man's sufferance. He suffered the world but he himself was free, entirely free. Of no one else, I say with great regard, can this be said."

The agony in Rajaji's soul at the assassination of the torch bearer of truth and the apostle of *ahimsa* was too deep for words. "No man ever loved his sweetheart more than Mahatma Gandhi loved us. When the bird was struck down by the cruel hunter, Valmiki was overwhelmed with pity and shouted: 'O cruel hunter, may you never find peace on earth!' That passion and the rhythm in which it found expression gave the rhythm and the melody to the *Ramayana*. May our own history be written to the tune and rhythm of the passion that was suffered by *Bharata Mata* when Mahatmaji fell! May the grievous tragedy that has been enacted in Delhi give us the inspiration and the rhythm for the shaping of our future history! . . . . There is plenty of reason for us to grieve for ourselves. Socrates died for his work and Christ died for his faith. We did not believe we could get any other example like that. 'Conquer hate by love' said Mahatma Gandhi all these years and he was killed because he preached love. '*Ishwara* is your name, *Allah* is your name, O Bhagavan, grant good sense to all our people!' he prayed every day and therefore he was killed. He was killed because he preached that all faiths are one and that all names are God. Let us not lament. Let us be proud and let us deserve him. He was the friend and lover of all men and women whom he met. Indeed, he was like Krishna and as Krishna died when a hunter's arrow pierced and sucked his life away, so also has our Krishna died. Let us not grieve for him and let us make up for our own faults. It is weakness to cry over our difficulties. What we have to do is to deserve having possessed, ever for a brief period of time, the man who has passed away."

Rajaji's writings had a range of subjects which hardly a few Indians of the present day display. We see them scattered about in his estimation of eminent leaders who had played a prominent part in India's emancipation. like Rajendra Prasad,

Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabhbhai Patel. His rare gift of attracting people results in portraying a saga of friendship in sketches of Navaratna Rama Rao and Khasa Subba Rao. His deep admiration for the ability and character of Western statesmen is seen in his praise for Washington, Lincoln, Attlee and others. His reverence for men of God is revealed in his tributes to the spiritual exaltation of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda, the saint Kabir of the Middle Ages and Pope John XXIII of the present century whom he personally met in his trip to the West in 1962. His appreciation of nobility in men and women is evident from his short tributes to Edward VIII and Oppenheimer, Muriel Lester and Maharani Gayatri Devi. His literary acumen shows itself in his assessment of Maxim Gorky and Anthony Trollope, Charles Dickens and Jane Austin. He praises Konrad Adenauer for raising Germany and his countrymen from the degradation and despair of defeat to her prominent position today among world nations. He showers a meed of unalloyed adulation for the integrity and intelligence of that doyen of Indian statesmen Sir M. Visvesvarayya, who impressed upon his people the necessity for making India an industrial nation if she has to raise her head high and earn the respect of Western countries.

How concise and consummate is his characterisation of Clement R. Attlee (later Earl Attlee). "Attlee was Britain's Prime Minister who signed India's freedom. He was one of England's great men of modern times. He was good without a blemish and he had a keen brain. One of the truly good men of Great Britain has been called off and I pay my sincere tribute of respect, gratitude and appreciation to the departed statesman." Nobility of character always attracted Rajaji, who admired the great sacrifice of Edward VIII for the love of Mrs. Wallis Simpson. "Sacrifice comes easily to noble minds when honour is at stake. Ramachandra gladly accepted banishment when his father Dasaratha's honour was in the balance. Valmiki tells this great story in the *Ramayana* as he alone can tell. British King, Edward VIII, gladly gave up his throne in the same manner in preference to letting down the lady he chose to marry and become an exile from Britain. 'If the clock could be turned back,' he said many years later, 'I shall do it all over again.' Of Rajendra Prasad, the First President



of Indian Republic, he writes: "Rajen Babu has left us But his example remains... there can be no better to copy for the children of *Bharat*. His unostentatious grace, his utter simplicity, his charity of outlook, his deep humility and his broad humanity are ineffaceable by Death and remain for our inspiration for all time. A good soul, an angel on earth, has left us and our world of illusion and anxieties and joined the One and Indivisible Supreme and serene Truth beyond our vision."

Rajaji's friendship and affection for Jawaharlal Nehru was something unique. Even as he looked upon Mahatma Gandhi as his Master, Rajaji had deep regard for the great integrity and sincere spirit of service that dominated Jawaharlal Nehru's life, although in later years he opposed him in the country's interest. In spite of all his differences and divergence of opinion on political affairs, Rajaji mourned his death calling him "the most civilized man amongst us". "Sri Nehru was a world figure," observed Rajaji in his obituary, "of whom India has every reason to be proud. The difference between him and Mahatma Gandhi was that while Gandhiji moulded history leaving the impress of his personality on the people and events of his time, Nehru was moulded by the events and drifts of his time. He did not make history but world history made him what he became. Nehru was a modern civilized citizen of exemplary culture. While Gandhi was a born rebel and questioner and was so even to the last minute when the assassin's bullets put an end to his life, Nehru's early moulding abroad by the ideals and forces around him explains all the policies which hold the present administration of India in its grip, which his weak successors have not the capacity to re-examine and revise or remould, although they are as unsure of their being right as any critics sitting on the Opposition Benches. Often have I felt that it would have been easy to get Jawaharlal Nehru, had he been alive, to mend things but those now in charge of the affairs are afraid to think of any deviation. Much mending is however absolutely necessary; hence these sad thoughts during a sad week."

The other dominating figure during India's freedom fight, who was almost a foil to Jawaharlal Nehru, was Vallabhbhai Patel whom Rajaji portrays with a masterly touch. "When

the independence of India was coming quite close upon us and Gandhiji was the silent master of our affairs, he had come to the decision that Jawaharlal Nehru who, among all the Congress leaders, was the most familiar and best acquainted with foreign affairs, should be the Prime Minister of Free India, although he knew that Vallabhbhai Patel would be the best administrator among them all. In those good days there was no jealousy or competition among us. So when Jawaharlal Nehru became the Prime Minister, Vallabhbhai Patel felt that he would be most useful as Home Minister. And so it was finally arranged. Now reflecting over it, one can say that undoubtedly it would have been better for the nation and its future if Jawaharlal Nehru had been asked to be the Foreign Minister and Vallabhbhai Patel had been made the Prime Minister of India. Vallabhbhai was a sturdy man, good for the job of Home Minister but a myth had grown about him that he would be harsh towards the Muslims. This was a wrong notion but it was the prevailing prejudice. Vallabhbhai was a very experienced and just person. He would not bend but he would be never unjust. Jawaharlal Nehru's enlightened personality was, however, overwhelming and we thought all would be well and that if he was made Premier, it would fit in better with the greatness of Free India and satisfy all minorities. India would then be an honoured member of the comity of free nations. Thinking over it all now it seems that this was not wise, though attractive. The history of India would have been entirely different if we had not fallen into this error. There would have been no diminution in the stature or lustre of India if Jawaharlal Nehru had been Foreign Minister and Vallabhbhai Patel had been Prime Minister. And India would have avoided under Vallabhbhai Patel many of the errors she was led into under Jawaharlal Nehru and the glamour that egalitarianism associated with Communism which captivated his innocent heart."

A man whose quest for the Supreme made him call upon his countrymen not to forsake *dharma* and *satya*, Rajaji was inspired by those god-intoxicated prophets of modern India—Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and his peerless disciple Swami Vivekananda. He was fascinated so much by the life and teachings of the Saint of Dakshineswar that he wrote a book

on him and his message to mankind and called it *Sri Ramakrishna Upanished* "It is no exaggeration to call Sri Ramakrishna's teachings an *Upanishad*. A sage like the *rishis* of old was born in our age. This was Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. He wrote no book; he made no speech. He lived a true *sanyasi's* life and passed away. He used to talk to his disciples who sat and listened to him. His disciples wrote down the words of their Master. It is a record of his teachings. Learned men with a command of language can and write excellent essays and discourses. But these writings lack true life. Sri Ramakrishna was a Mahatma who saw God in his heart and in all things in the world outside. He saw Him in all things with the same certainty and strength of feeling with which we see each other. Such remarkable seers have sprung in different lands from time to time "

Of Swami Vivekananda who carried the message of his master across seas and lands, Rajaji wrote on the occasion of his centenary "Vivekananda's predecessors in the line of Indian patriots did great work but it was he who made us shed our inferiority complex. Reformers in all departments of life there were many but the nation suffered from a basic weakness, a sense of inferiority, which it was necessary to cure; and Swami Vivekananda did it in a most effective way 'Know in what matter you are really great and strive to be yet greater in that way,' he said to India. That was his clarion call. 'Your greatness lies in the realization of your spirituality. Therein awaits true fulfilment on your own account as well as your place in the world.' To the Christian world he said 'Do not look down on Hinduism. It tells man that he is pure and sinless and can realise godhood if he sheds delusion and weakness. There is no need to grieve or believe that we are born in sin ' Vivekananda put courage where there was fear and linked man to God, in a bond of confidence.' He swept away the doctrinal differences of philosophical schools and made *Vedanta* into one proud and firm faith. He wanted spirituality to govern politics and every other effort. In that he anticipated Mahatma Gandhi, He did not want anyone to believe that Hinduism had to be mended in order to make it good enough. He saw it as a whole and claimed it was superbly true "

Rajaji's catholicity of religious outlook and his veneration

for the other great faiths of the world evoked his appreciation for men of God. In 1962 he visited the USA as the leader of the Gandhi Peace Foundation Mission. He had an interview with President Kennedy and on his return back home, Rajaji was most graciously granted an audience at Rome by Pope John XXIII. The interview with the Holy Pontiff had such an impact on Rajaji that he was shocked at his passing away some months afterwards. The Venerable Pope was different from most of his distinguished predecessors and identified himself with the life of the common man without any consciousness of his eminence. Rajaji's tribute to him bears the stamp of a sincere feeling of loss for a personage for whom he had the highest regard. "When even months ago," writes Rajaji in an obituary in *Swarajya* of 15 June 1963, "Pope John XXIII gave me an audience in the third week of June 1962, we discussed the possibility of a great appeal on his part for withdrawing all nuclear weapons from national armaments and for the immediate cessation of all test explosions, it did not in the least seem that death was so near and His Holiness's efforts in the direction of peace on earth would so abruptly end. The Encyclical issued recently by him embodied a great appeal for nuclear disarmament and a cessation of all test explosions and for international tolerance and wise understanding. It received an unusually warm welcome from the press of the world and by the statesmen of all nations. The ink is still wet, so to say, on that document when death has snatched the good Pontiff from us. Let us hope that death will sanctify and not obliterate that great appeal. Mr. Krushchev and Mr. Kennedy can raise a great historical memorial for Pope John XXIII, not of marble or of bricks, but of that stuff which will save generations from deformity and ill-health and give hope to mankind's precarious civilization. Pope John initiated remarkable policy changes in the Catholic Church, which hold great promise for world welfare and harmony. The Pontiff started out breaking precedents and continued to shift away from the past and adapt his reign to today's needs in the world. Pope John XXIII gave a new image to the Papacy and projected his own warm personality upon the global stage. Since the Vatican lost most of its temporal power, Popes rarely ventured to go out of Vatican territory. But Pope John made more than a hundred

visits outside, by foot, train and car. He laughed and chatted with people easily and indulged in witticisms, always however maintaining kindness, humility and dignity. He appointed the first Negro and Japanese Cardinals in Church history. Much of Pope John's approach was a response to the changed conditions of the world. His successor, whoever it may be, takes over the leadership of a Church which bears the strong personal imprint of a great and much loved predecessors."

Rajaji's admiration for the Founder of the USA and the great emancipator of slaves therein finds a tribute, short and sweet, to those two great Americans in a thumb-nail sketch of their outstanding qualities. "George Washington, whose honesty and courage became a world legend and whose name honours the metropolis of free United States could never have imagined that his successors would betray America's honour as is being done now. Abraham Lincoln, who plunged his country into a Civil War in order to establish the principle that human beings, to whatever race they may belong, could not become property to be bought and sold, could not have believed that any American government would betray America's honour as is now being sought to be done."

Prominent among the personalities who won his praise were two women, Sister Subbulakshmi and Maharani Gayatri Devi. The first was a social worker who dedicated her entire life to the service of the poor. The second was a lady who left her palace to fight for the people on the floor of Parliament at New Delhi. Rajaji paid a tribute of tears on the death of Sister Subbulakshmi in these words: "On the Holy Ekadasi Day last Friday an angel on earth, pure as finest gold, passed away to join the lap of the Beloved Universal Mother. Sister Subbulakshmi, who was widowed during her childhood, was educated and remained a widow, to serve many years in the Madras Service for Women's Education, and to put her whole soul into the task of relieving the affliction of numerous unfortunate women, giving them hope and new life. She threw off her bodily tenement on Friday night. She lived a life of work and helpfulness, setting a great example for the widowed women of our land. I remember a Jubilee Day many years ago when I presided and witnessed a chorus of gratitude which was showered from their

hearts by the assembled beneficiaries of Sister Subbulakshmi's life-giving touch."

Maharani Gayatri Devi holds a special corner in Rajaji's heart. She forsook her royal apartments and regal life and rode out into the tumult and clash of the Indian political scene, unafraid of the consequences that may overtake her by her action in joining a party other than the Congress. Politics in India being what it is at present, a game for men greedy for gold and power, absolute strangers to ethics and morality, her action won the unstinted admiration of Rajaji: "Maharani Gayatri Devi of Jaipur announced her joining the Swatantra Party the same week as the British Queen and her consort visited that historical place and were her guests. The Maharani has, by this brave act, dispelled by one stroke the fog of fear and lackeyism that blurs the vision and confounds the understanding of many sections of the Indian public, who ought to know democracy better than to tremble before the Congress Party, as if it were a Czarist rule threatening to ruin any one that dared to differ, or take any constitutional step to challenge its authority. Maharani Gayatri Devi takes as honoured place alongside the Rani of Jhansi for her bravery in the present days of authoritarianism. Here is a woman of India that represents the courage that the poet-sage put into Sita, who spurned the threats of Ravana even when she was a prisoner in his garden. All men who have the future of India in their hearts, the future of freedom and democracy, the future of Indian manhood, should cherish this great gesture of Gayatri Maharani as a great and inspiring example."

Samuel Johnson in his "Ode to Friendship" describes in felicitous language that rare relationship between man and man, which is the fine flower and fulfilment of their affection as follows:

Friendship, peculiar boom of Heaven,  
Thd noble mind's delight and pride,  
To men and angels only given,  
To all the lower world denied

Some great friendships ennobled and enlightened the long life of Rajaji, of which two are set out by him in the language of

incomparable love. His teenage friendship with Navaratna Rama Rao, starting when they met in college as students, ripened into a rare saga of devotion and admiration of each other and lasted all their life, being snapped only by the cruel hand of death. They were about the same age when they first came to know each other and shared the same delight in English literature, a union of souls inhabiting two different bodies, inseparable in their love for all that makes life rich and radiant. On the passing away of Navaratna Rama Rao, Rajaji went into deep mourning for one who had become a part of his own being. In his tribute Rajaji says: "I was attracted by his brains, his brightness, his lovable character and exterior, and by his being better read than all the rest of us in the college, and as fond of great English literature as myself. We were friends until death parted us on 27th November 1960, after sixty-eight years of unbroken attachment. We read a lot together—Byron, Shakespeare, Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson, Thackeray, Dickens and books of many other classical authors. He was the greater connoisseur of us two and his taste was superb and he guided me like a mesmerist. We laughed and enjoyed humour and talked metaphysics and educated each other continuously. Our friendship was an astonishment and mystery to our college mates but they tolerated it and gathered round both of us in admiration. Our mutual affection made us nobler and better and stronger and happier than either of us would have been without it. We were each the external life of the other as Valmiki puts it in respect of Sri Lakshmana for Sri Rama. All life is a mystery and I realize it more and more every day, as one after another of my colleagues and friends pass away and I am left in increasing loneliness. Life is a mystery but love is the greatest mystery in it. Dear young men and women, prize friendship as we two did—Rama Rao and I. We swore to ourselves, each in his own mind, that we should be friends for all life. And so we were for all these nearly seventy years, one soul in two bodies, and two lives in each body. This kind of friendship will keep you from sin, from all kinds of meanness. It will protect you like a guardian angel, against all evil, all unhappiness and all stepping down from the ideals of romantic youth."

The other great friendship in Rajaji's life was for a younger man whom he met much latter after he had passed his middle

age. Khasa Subba Rao had been a fighter for the common cause of the freedom of India. But it was his talent as a journalist that brought him into Rajaji's circle of intimacy and affection. He was suffering from a mortal disease from which death released him mercifully. Rajaji wrote on his passing away: "The world of journalism in India has lost one of its best and bravest veterans. He was a fierce soldier for truth and justice, with a heart as gentle as a child's. Altogether he was a rare type of man. His affectionate devotion to me these last days was such that my bereavement is next only to his wife's. He has gone to the peace that belongs to good men. He was a shining example all his life, teaching men how to be fearless, how to sacrifice, how to be good and how to be useful. He was an authentic representative of God to me in these difficult days which I am passing through. I have lost one who bathed me with his affection and rejuvenated me when I felt weary. He was beloved of all, because he overflowed with love and forgiveness for all. He helped me with his own courage when I felt mine failing. He gave hope when I felt depressed. He would urge the constant presence of God whenever I felt lonely. He stood like a rock for *dharma* and compassion. He was every moment of his life an example and a demonstration of the complete surrender to the Divine Ruler, which alone gives the peace which the soul yearns for. In this he was a monitor to me. My bereavement is great and I am unable to suppress my self-pity."

The wide reading of world literature, in the original or in translation into English, that was Rajaji's intellectual equipment, enabled him to estimate the relative worth of great writers in a manner that would have aroused the envy of eminent professional critics. His taste for true classics was shown by his definition of what a classic is and who are the writers acknowledged as the masters of the art of writing. Broadcasting over the All India Radio, Madras on 5 August 1961, he gave the test by which the works of writers are to be judged, if they are to be accepted as the authentic voice of permanent literature. "Classics are literary works that have attained the highest standard of quality. The lives of people are shaped by such writings. Ideas of right and wrong are greatly shaped by what great writers and poets have written and sung. Our very measuring standards of



literary merit are formed on the basis of such writings. Quality survives and the survival itself enhances its quality. If Valmiki, Vyasa, Tulasidas, Kalidasa, Kamban, Shakespeare, Milton and the authorised version of the English Bible are classics, it is not only because they are of the highest quality but also because we have built our own minds, so to speak, out of these classics. There is nothing so good to nourish life as the material that has gone to build that life. Classics are a class apart and sit guard over new writings, vigilantly watching quality. Classics give us perpetual intellectual pleasure reuniting us with great souls of the past. When we read them, they occupy us to the exclusion of the present times. They elevate our souls. They guard us against vanity and all other evils. They are all the unbroken Voice of God, the Eternal Watchman and Friend."

It is interesting to record the impressions of Rajaji about the works of some of these classical writers. His reading extended from Francis Bacon to Francis Thompson, Thoreau to Tolstoy, Jane Austin to Dickens and Thackeray, Maxim Gorky to Anthony Trollope, Edmund Burke to Charles Lamb, George Bernard Shaw and Bertrand Russell. His intimate knowledge of Shakespeare made him declare that Shakespeare was the most consummate artist in all the world's literature. His reverence for Socrates and his remarkable life and rare wisdom won the admiration of Rajaji. Maxim Gorky's autobiography thrilled him about whom he says "What marvellous understanding! And life in Russia in those days was really very much like our life here—with the joint family, similar customs and superstitions, and even the same sort of religious beliefs, which the Communists are now busily destroying." Of Jane Austin he writes "All these novels of Jane Austin are concerned with the question of how to get a husband and how much money there is to be. The subject is important but of limited interest. But Jane Austin's understanding of the complexities of women is really remarkable. There must be at least three hundred and thirty varieties of female character and she understood nearly all of them. I don't suppose any writer ever had a better insight into the mind of the British female."<sup>12</sup> When Rajaji went to jail for the first time, he contented himself with only a few

books. "I did not take even ten books with me when I went to jail for the first time. I took the *Bible* and Socrates and Robinson Crusoe and six volumes of the English translation of the *Mahabharata* by P. C. Roy." Rajaji remembers that Gandhiji and he were influenced by the same books like Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" and Socrates' "Crito" and "Phaedra."

A born story-teller, Rajaji's parables originally written in Tamil and translated into English, remind the reader of the *Hitopadesa* and the *Bible*, being instinct with the same wisdom and inspiring the same way of life. His volume of short stories entitled "Stories For The Innocent" depicts incidents in the life of the common people, their trials and their temptations, their simple virtues and their sublime faith in God, their marvellous resignation to their fate accepting it as the will of the Almighty. In these pictures of present-day life in India Rajaji weaves his philosophy into the fabric of his narrative in his own incomparable way and delineates men and women as they flit across the pageant of the world's drama. Whether his story deals with a drunkard's life or the duplicity practised in elections, the Hindu concept of rebirth or the inexorable toll of *karma*, his inimitable manner of infusing the need for the observance of *dharma* and the necessity for relying on the Divine compels our admiration for his gift of story-telling, comparable to Tolstoy and Kipling. His stories are part of his rich contribution to the renaissance of Tamil literature in the twentieth century.

Literature is the spontaneous expression of the soul of a people as evidenced in their abundant national life. The current literature of a nation, says Rajaji, is the product of its current life. At the same time its living writers and authors in their turn inspire the life of a nation. Therefore, a nation should be active with aspirations of an exalted nature and should not come down to the level of beasts by hankering after animal desires and lusts that result in the destruction of the body and damnation of the soul. Not only did he write about varied topics that affect the welfare of men in the English language but he also translated the immortal treasures of Tamil literature into the English language. That is how we owe him a deep debt of gratitude for enabling us to enjoy the Tiruvalluvar's "Kural" and Kamban's "Ramayana", which are among the classics of Indian literature. He himself wrote stories and

parables that delighted millions of readers, young and old, and are instinct with the wisdom of the ancients.

Among present-day writers in the Tamil language, he considers Subrahmanya Bharati, the poet-politician of South India, as one without a peer. "Bharati is an immortal poet. He is one of the chief glories of Tamil poetry. His poems do not satisfy man's emotions only for the moment. They are for all time. Those who take unchartered excursions into what he has written will find richness of thought, emotion, imagery, melody and matchless beauty. It will becom the future generations to sing his songs and to realize the glorious pride of our tradition, heritage, cultural attainment and philosophy. . . . Bharati lived amongst us, talked to us, sang to us, breathed the same air and ate the same food as ourselves. He is not a mythical figure. He has depicted in his poems our faults, imperfections and defects."<sup>13</sup>

Rajaji was a man of great culture. The worth of a nation is known by its culture, even as its place in the comity of nations is assessed by its contribution to human civilization. Culture also includes the appreciation of the fine arts like painting and sculpture, music and dance. The culture of a nation depends on its situation in the world, the religion its people follow, its history down the ages, and its philosophy of life. Further, the culture of a people is revealed by the various forms its entertainment takes, its sports and pastimes which differ from country to country. "If you wish to be a man of culture," says Rajaji, "you should try to forget your own self and keep the other fellow always in mind. It is only when ego disappears from one's consciousness that one attains the high and noble characteristics of a cultured person. This applies as much to women as to men, to boys as well as to girls."<sup>14</sup>

All human efforts and endeavours are after all directed towards the achievement of happiness in the family and true harmony with the world outside. As Robert Burns says:

To make a happy fireside warm  
For weans and wife

13. *Rajaji's Speeches*, Vol I, pp. 138-139

14. *Bhavan's Journal*, Divali Number, 1969

Is the right and true endeavour  
Of human life.

The home is the unit and the whole of humanity is the largest group in the ultimate ideal of realising this great goal. Rajaji is a great believer in this noble concept which is set out in the simple words of the ancient Indian teaching: "*Serve Janah Sukhino Bhavantu*. May all mankind be happy!"

"The only happiness worth a wise man's seeking," says Rajaji, "is permanent happiness as distinguished from fleeting pleasures that are exhausted by enjoyment like a credit account in a bank, either here or in the world beyond. Absolute happiness can result only from liberation and it follows therefore that spiritual enlightenment alone, which frees the soul from all illusion, can liberate the soul from the bond of *karma*, the unending chain of work and results and unite it again to the Supreme Being, which is *moksha* (liberation). This has been expressed by Milton when he says in exquisite language "The mind in its own place can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven" or in the words of the ancient Greek philosopher that what a man thinks he becomes. It leads us to the inevitable conclusion that to realise happiness and harmony of life, a man must enforce stern control on his thoughts and concentrate on what is desirable, not on the ephemeral enjoyments of life that are provided by wealth, power, fame, avoiding the vile indulgence of the baser instincts of the body that wreck his soul beyond redemption. Wordsworth's concept of the "Happy Warrior" is poor in comparison with the ineffable definition of a *Sthithapragna*, a person whose thoughts are concentrated on the Divine and on the quest for the Supreme. Rajaji quotes from the *Bhagavad Gita* what a *Sthithapragna* is "One must be undisturbed by the desires that assail him from all sides. Such a one attains serenity of mind, not he that allows himself to be affected by the desires that tempt him. Overcoming desires and living a life of self-restraint and discarding the idea of I and mine, that is, saving oneself free from egoism and love of possessions, man attains serenity of mind which is true happiness and arms himself effectively against delusion. Not only this but if this attitude is kept up at the time of death, his departing soul attains salvation."

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

# The India of Rajaji's Dreams

*We are such stuff as dreams are made of and our  
little life is rounded with a sleep.*

—Shakespeare

THE great men of the world at all periods of its history have each worked in his own way for his ideal concept of what their country should be. Most of them have striven for the freedom of their people or for equality between man and man, once they have won their liberty. The clarion call of the French Revolution in 1789 was "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity!" The quest for equal rights to the white man and the Negro in the United States of America was achieved in the nineteenth century by Abraham Lincoln, the greatest gift of America to the world, after a long and arduous Civil War. The death-knell of Imperialism in all its insidious disguises and infamous forms was struck soon after the Second World War in the first half of the twentieth century by most nations of Asia and Africa becoming independent. But freedom alone did not bring happiness in its wake, even as mere equality did not result in the recognition of a right to a decent existence for the poorer strata of the population by the richer classes in all countries. Last but not least, the world presents today the none-too-pleasant spectacle of monolithic States like Soviet Russia and Communist China where man is a mere cog in the machine of the State,

grinding mercilessly the bodies and souls of its citizens, destroying their individuality, desecrating their integrity of thought and action in an awful attempt to achieve supreme power at the expense of moral values. In the history of the world there have never been such hideous paradoxes and one begins to wonder where all these happenings will lead to—surely not to a divine destiny for man as the Great Creator in His wisdom intended!

Among the many facets of his fascinating personality Mahatma Gandhi had also the temperament of a rare visionary. He worked for an ideal with indefatigable zeal and would count no cost too great to achieve it, prepared even to sacrifice his life if necessary. The weapons he employed to realise his ends were ethical and based on eternal values. Men marvelled at his missionary ardour whether he tackled the problem of prohibition, the evils of untouchability, the question of communal harmony, or the most important of all his endeavours, the freedom of India. An apostle of truth and an ardent devotee of *ahimsa* he forged these twin ideals into the invincible weapon of *satyagraha* which he utilised in a unique manner to humble the pride and power of the British people. The man was greater than his words, his life more glorious than the ineffable light he has left behind for men to be illumined by for thousands of years hereafter. Yet he was always in quest of an ideal for his country and his people, he was haunted by a vision of what he wanted India to become in the years to come. And this was the *Rama Rajya* of Mahatma Gandhi's dreams.

I remember to have read, I forget whether in the Delhi Fort or the Agra Fort, a verse on one of the gates, which when translated reads. 'If there is paradise on earth, it is here, it is here, it is here.' That Fort with all its magnificence at its best, was no paradise in my estimation. But I should love to see that verse with justice inscribed on the gates of Pakistan at all the entrances. In such a paradise, whether it is in the Union or Pakistan, there will be neither paupers nor beggars, nor high nor low, neither millionaire employers nor half-starved employees, nor intoxicating drugs or drinks. There will be the same respect for women as vouchsafed to men and the chastity and purity of men and women will be jealously guarded. Where every woman except one's wife,

will be treated by men of all religions as mother, sister or daughter according to her age. Where there will be no untouchability and where there will be equal respect for all faiths. They will be all proudly, joyously and voluntarily bread labourers. I hope everyone who listens to me or reads these lines will forgive me if stretched on my bed and basking in the sun, inhaling life-giving sunshine, I allow myself to indulge in this ecstasy.<sup>1</sup>

A true disciple of his Master, Rajaji also indulged in a vision of a great and glorious India in the future. Again and again he recalls to his countrymen the rich heritage of culture and civilization that is a legacy from the *rishis* and sages of ancient India. And he admonishes them for their fall from the height to which Mahatma Gandhi had raised them in the pre-independence days. But he never gives up the hope of their regaining their former prestige in the world's esteem if only they should follow and fulfil the ordinances of their *dharma* and their religion. He echoes the famous words of Jesus Christ: "What doth it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loseth his own soul?" He feels that there is more fear of God and sense of religion among the poorer classes than among the elite of Indian society. Yet his call is to the rich and the poor alike to heed the whisper of God and not to be lured away from the path of righteousness by the temptations of the Devil, forgetting that the Great Friend is waiting to greet them at the Journey's End!

Being a great devotee of *dharma*, Rajaji places first and foremost the observance of *dharma* and the fear of God in his dream-picture of India when ideal conditions of life prevail. "I want an India where *dharma* once again rules the hearts of men, and not greed. I want the money power of big business to be isolated from politics. Democracy is hard to be worked and it should not be ruined by money power and rendered into a simulacrum by expensive elections and Big Business supporting the ruling party with funds in return for privileges or in fear of the State's regulatory powers."<sup>2</sup>

The great spiritual forerunner of Mahatma Gandhi at the

1. *Dellu Diary*, by Mahatma Gandhi, p. 342

2. "*Swarajya*", 17 February 1962.

end of the nineteenth century, Swami Vivekananda, called upon the people of India to shed their fear and their national inferiority complex. His clarion call to his countrymen was: "Know in what matter you are really great and strive to be greater in that way. Your greatness lies in the realization of spirituality. Therein awaits your true fulfilment on your own account as well as your place in the world." Rajaji had great reverence for this incomparable disciple of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, who infused a profound sense of *abhaya* or fearlessness into his people. Like Mahatma Gandhi after him Swami Vivekananda's ideal was the spiritualization of politics and to give a religious turn to every human effort. Rajaji also advocated the necessity for people, especially businessmen, adopting an attitude of absolute independence and forthrightness when dealing with officials, without being cowed down by their show of authority or getting favours done by greasing the palms of officials or purchasing favour from influential members of party in power. Unless such moral courage is exhibited by everyone in all walks of life, the country will become benighted and morally degenerate. Rajaji had noticed the growing tendency on the part of the business community and traders to encourage corruption for their own advantage, while those of their confederates who were upright in their dealings had to face untold hardships and hurdles. "I want an India clear of the atmosphere of fear in which it is now enveloped where honest men engaged in the difficult tasks of production or trade can carry on their occupation without fear of ruin at the hands of officials, ministers and party bosses."<sup>3</sup> Again and again Rajaji had attacked the evils of permit-license raj and how it tended to create monopolies in favour of men whose money could influence those in power. Those who stooped conquered while those who stood up against the government in a spirit of defiant independence suffered to their enormous loss and everlasting regret. Hence the assertion of Rajaji that unless *abhaya* or fearlessness prevails among the people, they will not prosper nor the country progresses in the right direction.

The prosperity of a country depends upon the well-being of

3. "*Samarajya*", 17 February 1962



the toilers in the fields and workers in the factories. As Goldsmith says in his famous poem, "The Deserted Village":

Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey,  
Where wealth accumulates and men decay;  
Princes and Lords may flourish or may fade,  
A breath can make them as a breath has made  
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,  
When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

"I want an India," says Rajaji, "where the peasants are not intimidated or beguiled into giving up their lands for Mr. Nehru to build castles in the air through co-operative farming. The Congress government in thoughtless imitation of Soviet Russia embarked on a scheme of collective farming, forgetting that the whole venture has proved an utter failure compelling the Communist leaders to import huge quantities of food from the United States and Canada to feed their hungry millions. As a corollary to this comes the sacredness of property, whether acquired by an Indian citizen or inherited by him. Various attempts have been made successfully by the Congress government to take away the fundamental right to property which is guaranteed by the Constitution. There have been more and more inroads on the fundamental rights and insidious attempts made by the government to acquire the property of citizens without adequate compensation being paid to them. I want security for all owners of property, land or other forms of acquisition without a Sword of Damocles hanging over them threatening expropriation without payment of just and full compensation, as fixed by judicial authorities on correct principles and not according to the dictation of political legislation."<sup>4</sup> (In all democratic countries a citizen's property is not acquired by the State for a public purpose without making a just and adequate return for its loss, as exemplified in Great Britain, the United States and France. The forcible seizure of a man's property without full compensation being paid for it just because the State wants it, prevails only in totalitarian States like Soviet Russia.) Rajaji tried with

all his moral strength to stem this creeping tide of authoritarianism on the part of the Congress government in its ostensible march towards socialism, by enacting legislation with its brute majority and lulling the country into the false delusion that it is building up a "socialistic pattern of society."

During the last two decades since the enactment of the Constitution there has been an insidious erosion of the fundamental rights of the people. Being one who fought shoulder to shoulder with Mahatma Gandhi and his noble band of colleagues for India's liberty, Rajaji always opposed the tampering with the true substance of freedom by the government resulting in the shrivelling up of the fundamental rights of the citizens. "I want the fundamental rights to be restored," declares this doyen among defenders of democracy, "to their original shape and kept intact."<sup>5</sup> Fundamental rights are rights which are absolutely essential for the enjoyment of liberty even as light and air, food and clothing are necessary for the existence of human beings. They are rights which dictators have sought to suppress even in the twentieth century, even as men have struggled to preserve them from the dawn of history against tyrants and autocrats. They are rights for whose recognition men and women have down the ages undergone untold suffering and misery, faced *lathi* and gun, bullets and bombs, mounted the scaffold with a smile in their lips and ecstasy in their hearts. The religious persecution which culminated in the inhumanities of the Spanish Inquisition in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Europe, or the horrors of the Concentration camps at Belsen in Hitler's Germany, the right to the freedom of the press which Milton in the seventeenth century so valiantly championed in his famous book, *Areopagitica*, the tyranny of the Kings of France which led to the French Revolution of 1789 with its clarion call to the oppressed peoples of Europe—Liberty, Fraternity, Equality; the attempt of Western nations like England to perpetuate their domination over India that led to the non-cooperation movement of Mahatma Gandhi for winning *Swaraj*, the shaking of by the Indonesian people of the colonial despotism of Holland—all these have at different times in the world's history resulted in the establishment of certain basic

rights for human happiness—political, social, economic, religious and cultural—that men may enjoy fully the fruits of freedom. For without these fundamental rights, liberty will be only a lovely flower to look at without fragrance, comparable to a corpse decked out in funeral finery, the body of a man without a soul!

Rajaji was not a lotus-eater or one carried away by mere visions. He was a practical realist, a down-to-earth thinker. He found that one of the great evils of the Congress government was its fondness for imposing more and more taxes year after year to improve its finances. Rajaji condemned this tendency to lay heavier burdens on the people, who already bore taxes and levies of every kind, that were the heaviest in any country of the world today. The State must collect taxes from the people, says Rajaji, as a bee draws from a flower its honey without affecting its fragrance, much less shrivelling up its petals! It has been found by eminent economists that India is the most heavily taxed country in the world compared to the income of the common man. Rajaji bewails against this burden of taxation that bends down the people under its unbearable load.

In the most democratic countries of the West it is found that the citizen enjoys the largest amount of freedom consistent with the maintenance of law and order and the observance of all civilized norms that contribute to the welfare and happiness of the community as a whole. There have been many definitions of democracy but the most acceptable of them all is, perhaps, that of Abraham Lincoln, namely, "the government of the people, by the people, and for the people." This concept of the noblest of American Presidents connotes what should be the ideal of freedom in a modern democratic State. Mahatma Gandhi, more than whom there was no greater fighter in the present century for individual liberty, declares: "A nation that runs its affairs, smoothly and effectively without much State interference is truly democratic, where such a condition is absent, the form of government is democratic only in name." In other words, Gandhi wanted minimum government. The greatest evil of over-government, observes Rajaji, is that slowly and by a most insidious process, the people get quite enervated resulting in their inability ultimately to offer any resistance to a regime backed by the might of arms.

Gandhiji also emphasised the evils of over-government by contrasting them with the desirability of minimum government, when he said: "I hope to demonstrate that real *Swaraj* will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when abused. In other words, *Swaraj* is to be attained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority." Rajaji strongly supported this view of the Father of the Nation and declared that over-government like irresponsibility is always pleasant but it ends in the disease of the body politic and the damnation of its soul. "The sapping of the people's power of resistance, which is the inevitable result of over-government and of permits, controls and quotas, makes them an easy prey to any kind of coup, good or bad. We see this taking place before our very eyes in instance after instance. Democracy is bound to die under over-government."<sup>6</sup> Therefore, argues Rajaji, there must be a limit set on the powers of the government in the interests of the common weal. This can be done only by an effective Opposition to the government, continuing to function without fear and fulfilling its *dharma* as the guardian of the rights of the common man whenever they are jeopardised by the executive. The question arises what should be the limitations on the power of the State; in other words, what are the frontiers of a citizen's freedom? "It is the citizen that is the reality and the tangible and unalterable fact. His freedom must be taken for granted for all mechanism, which is good or bad, being made in all parliamentary democracies out of a majority of votes and many other circumstances not altogether perfect or even good. The frontiers of this mechanism created by the citizens for their good must be strictly and carefully limited. The frontiers of the citizen's freedom must be as wide as possible and the benefit of the doubt must ever go to the latter."<sup>7</sup>

A great admirer of Edmund Burke, one of England's most eminent political thinkers and statesmen, Rajaji quotes him in support of his view and declares that the failure of the Congress government is in contrast to the ideal of democracy.

6 *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, 14 August 1960

7 *Swarajya*, 12 June 1965

"Men are qualified for liberty," declares Burke, "in exact proportion to the disposition to put chains on their own appetites; in proportion as their love of justice is above their rapacity, in proportion to their love of soundness and sobriety of understanding is above their vanity and presumption; in proportion as they are more disposed to listen to the counsels of the wise and the good in preference to the flattery of knaves." (Rajaji dreams of a day when democracy will really flourish in India without in any way affecting the freedom of the individual on the fundamental rights of the citizen. This is possible of realization when there is a strong Opposition, fearless in its criticism of the ruling party and in exposing the evil of its ways, so that the wheels of democracy may run smoothly along a true and straight path. Lastly, the State must know, says Rajaji, how far it can go in its attempt to capture power and authority without affecting the basis of good government.)

"I want the State to know its limitations and function in humility and the citizens to realize their spirituality through the traditional channels inherited by them in that regard."<sup>8</sup> The latter part of Rajaji's dream can be realised if the people have a true concept of their ancient heritage. India has been known from time immemorial as the cradle of spirituality and its wise men in the past as the torch-bearers of the noblest ideals of man. True civilization is respect for moral values, observes Rajaji, and India's progress lies only in re-establishing moral values in the lives of everyone, be he rich or poor. There is a sad fall in the moral level of the Indian people after independence, due to their pursuit of the will 'o' the wisp of wordly prosperity, forgetting the ordainments of their religion and the teachings of great ancestors. Rajaji notices even a spirit of atheism and godlessness stalking the land and perverting the minds of people because India has been declared a "secular State" under the Constitution. "The reinstallation of God and religion is absolutely necessary if our people's character at all levels should be inspired to the opening of our hearts to God."<sup>9</sup> As a corollary to this necessity for giving God and religion the supreme place in the aims and ambitions

8. *Swarajya*, 17 February 1962

9. *Swarajya*, 14 October 1972.

of our people for the country's progress and prosperity, he urges that moral values should be restored in the life of the Indian people, who have become apathetic to this. In other words, men and women must show real reverence for their religion and act according to its injunctions. The elite of the society must become living examples of a religious life and show the poorer classes the value of morality in their conduct and behaviour. "Today we find that individual advantage of some kind or another seems to be the major motive of young people who are brought up on modern knowledge. We may try to teach them what are called the civic virtues, and the attempt will not altogether be useless. (Morality without religion is like calories without vitamins; it may do some good, particularly in cutting out fanaticism, but it will not build the inner strength which comes from the practice of good conduct which boys and girls are taught to perform as part of their homage to a Supreme Being)"<sup>10</sup>

A great lover of his country and its culture, its perennial philosophy of *Vedanta*, its spirit of toleration of other great world religions, Rajaji's concept of an ideal state of conditions to prevail in terms of its image in the esteem of nations is one marked with optimism. He has hope for the future of India, whatever vicissitudes it may be passing through at the present time, however much it may be victimised for their selfish purposes by men of little minds and low thoughts who wield power and authority today. A man gifted with vision and endowed with wisdom of a rare kind which only men like Buddha and Confucius, Socrates and Christ are blessed with, Gandhiji felt that he was carrying out God's work in his struggle for *Swaraj* in India and that God was guiding every step of his in embarking on his people's emancipation, even as he had an endless faith in the Eternal! Unbowed by the opposition to his movement for liberty among some sections of his own countrymen, undaunted by jokes and jeers that were hurled at him by critics abroad, unmoved by the unexpected reverses that blocked his path to success, he carried on his fight until God crowned his efforts with victory. This was possible for him because he was a man of God, who heard the whisper of the Eternal Guide

10. *I Meet Rajaji*, p. 38.

admist the tumult and travail of soul that filled Mahatma Gandhi with agony at the sight of his followers breaking his injunctions and indulging in acts for which he often offered his own life as expiation! India was identified during those memorable days as Gandhi's land, his people were thought of highly and praised because they were Gandhi's countrymen; the world bowed down in reverence before a man who had shown that the strength of the spirit in a devotee of truth and *ahimsa* could work miracles and conquer the might of the most powerful empire on earth today accepting defeat at the hands of a divinely inspired hero of humanity!

"I want India to regain her moral stature abroad," says Rajaji as the finale to his ineffable dream of what he wants India to be, "and I do not want our people to be bamboozled into thinking that we have not lost what moral authority we commanded during the days of Gandhiji."<sup>11</sup> Neither the rulers of the country nor the ruled have denied the statement of Rajaji that there has been a moral fall, a degeneration in the outlook and occupation of the people, an unbridgeable gap between the unctuous words of those in authority and their actions in reality during the last thirty years after India attained her independence. Gandhiji had lifted India and her people aloft into the empyrean but those who have become his political heirs and wield power today have betrayed him and proved false to the people. The world looked to India for moral lead recognising its superiority in the realm of the spirit. Two world wars had shown the West the futility of force and also forewarned them against the coming of another in the near future. In their darkness and despair the leaders of Europe and America looked for light to the East shown by a man in a loin-cloth whose nakedness of body revealed the radiant splendour of his soul. Even as Einstein observed about Gandhiji, "generations hence people will hardly believe that a man like this ever walked on the earth!" And the Indian people have cast aside such an incomparable legacy in favour of the double standards of life of the West, its duplicity and diplomacy, its devilish attempt to dangle material prosperity as a carrot before a donkey to lure men away from the path of *dharma* and righteousness. The Indian people must regain their

11. *Swarajya*, 17 February 1962

lost moral glory given to them by Gandhiji as his most precious gift after leading them to the threshold of liberty. Like an ostrich burying its head in the sand, they must not become blind to the realities that have rendered their lives so alien to truth, non-violence and probity. These must again become the ideals of the people of India, says Rajaji, summing up his dream of what India should be, not the call of Communism with its specious promise of building a paradise on earth with the broken bodies and enslaved souls of men and women. India must, as in the ages gone by, become the *punya bhoomi* whereon trod Sri Rama and Sri Krishna, Budda and Gandhi, Sankara and Ramanuja, a land that produced heroes and heroines like Pratap and Sivaji, Ahaiyabai and Lakshmibai, a land that gave birth to saints like Nandanar and Nammalwar, Mirabai and Tukaram, Kabir and Ramdas, Ramakrishna and Ramana. Then will India regain her spiritual supremacy in the world!



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

# The Summing Up

*... Unmoved,  
Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,  
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal.  
Nor number, nor example with him wrought  
To swerve from truth or change his constant mind.*  
—Milton

RAJAJI was one of the most controversial figures in Indian politics during the first half of the 20th century. Like his Master in the larger sphere of world affairs, *vis-a-vis* India's position in respect of her relations with Great Britain, he was often much misunderstood and even maligned by interested people in the Congress Party and outside it. But nothing swerved him from the straight path, he went on undaunted pursuing the light of *dharma*, dedicating his energies and efforts to the realisation of the ideals that inspired him, an example of supreme loyalty and devotion to the leader he had chosen, his life all given to the country's service in unstinting measure. He was considered good enough to occupy the distinguished office of the Governor-General of India but he was never chosen President of the Indian National Congress! That reveals the inner working of the minds of some top leaders of the Congress, whose parochial considerations and prejudiced opinions overwhelmed their sense of patriotism and prevented the conferment of the highest honour in the hands of the people on a colleague and co-worker of the calibre of Rajaji! His

opposition to some of their views, even including those of Mahatma Gandhi, led to his going into the political wilderness for some time and being greeted with black flag demonstrations by Congressmen. But a few clouds cannot hide the splendour of the sun. Rajaji's rare brilliance was seen at his best, not when he was in the Congress but when he left the party to found another in opposition to its policies and programmes that worked against the welfare and real interests of the masses of India.

"Rajaji is a man of deep convictions," said J.B. Kripalani in his tribute on the occasion of Rajaji's 93rd Birthday. "In his advocacy of what he considers at the time to be the right course, he is even ready to face unpopularity. He sometimes differed from Gandhiji but Gandhiji had a very high opinion of his intellect and judgment. . . . Rajaji always considered the freedom of the individual as the basis of democracy and even of real progress. It is only individuals believing in themselves and in their mission in life who have been instrumental in the progress of man. This is true even when they have, to all appearances, failed. Sometimes they have succeeded by dying for a cause. This is the way that the Economy of Nature works. Who can say that Christ on the Cross was a failure or Socrates drinking the hemlock cup or Gandhiji shot dead by a fanatic?"

No less a person than Rajendra Prasad, who was the First President of the Indian Republic for ten years, appreciated the ideals of the Swatantra Party which Rajaji was compelled to found in order to expose the erratic follies and egregious blunders of the Congress rulers, proudly conscious of their unbridled power and intent on preserving it for as long as possible at the cost of the people's happiness. The freedom fighter for India against British rule became transformed in course of time into an inveterate fighter for the freedom of the people, whose rights guaranteed to them under the Constitution were being whittled down one by one in the name of socialism. Rajaji declared that the socialist policies of the Congress Party were not far from the totalitarianism of Lenin and Stalin and that its brand of socialism was the harbinger of the hapless advent of Communism into the country. "I am Enemy Number One of Communism and Communists!" he had boldly asserted long ago. He saw in its insidious inroads into the working of the

government a danger that threatened not only the individuality of man but the very independence of India itself and would soon result in converting India into a satellite of the Communist empire, a hanger-on of the hegemony of the hammer and the sickle !

“Secrecy is a sin” declared Mahatma Gandhi, a dictum in which Rajaji had profound faith. Hence his life was an open book, his thoughts always finding true expression in frank and fearless utterance, even when he differed from Gandhi on important questions affecting the future of India. He was never afraid of hostile criticism of his views but aired them openly in opposition to the most potent in the land. He could walk with Kings and Presidents but never lost the common touch, in Kipling’s consummate language. A halo of moral grandeur surrounded him in spite of his life of simplicity that bordered on austerity and betokened the sublimity of his soul. Gifted with the mind of a scholar and the matchless versatility of a thinker, he came down to the level of ordinary human beings and loved to champion the causes of the lowly ones of earth, whether it was the untouchable or the slum-dweller at home or the Negro victims of white arrogance and superiority in America.

We have seen how the impact of Mahatma Gandhi on Rajaji in his middle age had made him a devoted lieutenant of Gandhi and a doughty fighter for India’s freedom. Most of the other distinguished men who had responded to the call of the country admired the ideals of Gandhi but could not adopt them in their actual life. But there was one man who was converted by the consummate philosophy of life and action so consistently preached and practised by the Father of the Nation and made it part of his own; there was one man who trod the Gandhian path of truth and non-violence whether he was in jail for the cause of the country’s emancipation or occupying Viceroy’s House; there was one man who made it the mission of his life, even as his Master had done, to impress on his people the urgent need for following *dharma* with faith in God; there was one man who was like Hanuman to Mahatma Gandhi—that was Rajaji!

What was the secret of Rajaji’s greatness? What were the qualities in him that won unstinted praise from the leaders

of the world in thought and action on his passing away? What was the charisma of his personality that made Gandhiji feel drawn to him from their earliest contact and consider him as his conscience keeper? Jawaharlal Nehru declared on the retirement of Rajaji as Governor-General of India that there after he would feel a certain emptiness in his life because of Rajaji's bidding farewell to Viceroy's House at New Delhi. Why were those in authority at India's Capital afraid of his true and trenchant criticism of their administration? The assassination of Mahatma Gandhi was not so crucial to the country's future as he had led it to the threshold of freedom. The death of Jawaharlal Nehru was not so fraught with danger to India's destiny as he had raised it high in the international sphere by his ideals. The passing away of Rajaji, however, leaves a void in the minds of millions of his countrymen for there is no one to take his place and send forth a clarion call for the purity of the administration, for urgent resurgence of *dharma*, for the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth!

The little Brahman lad, hailing from an unknown village near Salem, had in him the makings of a great lawyer. When prosperity smiled on him, he lost the beloved partner of his life whom he loved deeply and whom he nursed during her last illness with unsurpassed devotion. When he was at the peak of his profession, he heard Gandhiji's call and forthwith bade goodbye to his law books. With joy in his heart and a spirit of selfless sacrifice he responded for the cause of the country. When many years later he was made Governor-General, he accepted the honour in all humility. When the time came for him to step down from that position of dignity and splendour, he went back to his village to lead the simple life that had marked his career all through. When he again heard the distant rumblings of the thunder of discontent in the people's minds, he took over the command of the opposition to the rulers and even as Cromwell said to King Charles I, he delivered an ultimatum to those in authority "For God's sake, go!" But his voice was unheeded, his words were unheard, his wisdom was unappreciated!

He never felt disheartened or dismayed at what he saw for he always had high hope that the grace of God would not

forsake the descendants of the *rishis* who had given the world the *Vedas* and the *Unpanishads*. The great optimist that he was, he always believed in the truth of the beautiful words of the poet, "The darkest night cannot hold back the dawn!" He felt that the moral crisis through which the country is passing is but a transient phase. It must give place to a great and glorious renaissance of the spirit and India shall once again win back her premier position among world nations as in Gandhiji's days. For that there must be instilled in the minds of one and all a devotion to *dharma*, a feeling of godliness must inspire the lives of the rich and the poor, God must be enthroned again in men's hearts. If India is to become the "Rama Rajya" of Gandhiji's dreams, its people must shun the materialistic philosophy of the West, declared Rajaji often, they must not worship power as the *alpha* and *omega* of political life. Then alone will the fruits of freedom reach the poor man in hamlet and city, instead of being enjoyed only by the elite and the powerful as it is today!

Rajaji was a man of rare humility. At the end of his distinguished career, marked with great achievements in many fields of human activity that had brought him world renown, he confesses with ineffable frankness: "I am not a saint nor a sage. I am a humble believer and that is all, and I wish to speak the truth. I speak about my personal experience. Whenever I have keenly felt the distress of others and I pray for their relief, I have found God has answered. I say this to others confidently, pray for *others*, and God will surely relieve their distress and take care of you without your asking for it. If our concern is truly about other people and not about anything for oneself, God will help."<sup>1</sup> He always worked for raising the level of life of the poorer classes by providing them better homes than the slums of cities in which they spend their lives, by giving them the light of knowledge so that they might have opportunities to scale the heights attained by their brethren with more wealth; he admired their faith in God which he considered to be deeper than what existed in the elite of the society. He championed the cause of the untouchables, working shoulder to shoulder with Mahatma Gandhi. In his boundless

1. *Swarajya*, 18 March 1972.

sympathy for the misery of a drunkard's family he gave practical evidence of his evangelical spirit by placing on the Statute Book the first Prohibition Act in India when he was Chief Minister of Madras Province during 1937-1939. His simplicity of life and sublimity of thought, whether he was the occupant of "Viceroy's House" in New Delhi or resident in his own village in retirement, was the key to his humility and the corner-stone of his philosophy of life. This is borne out by his entry in his "Jail Diary" on January 15, 1922: "I never enjoyed more light and fresh air and a simple stroll in the open as I did this morning after my cell door was opened. I never understood the beauty or the taste of simple foodstuff as I do in prison. The exaggerated horror with which imprisonment is looked upon is as foolish as it would be to consider occasional fasts and retreat from busy life as great misfortunes."

Rajaji considered that regard for truth leads to humility of mind. It is foolish for a person, however high his status in society or vaunted wealth, not to behave in a manner fit for his station in life. A mere show of humility to win the praise of others will do him harm in the long run and ruin his soul. Wealth is transient, virtue is everlasting. Power is not perennial but the purity of a man's life will pull him through disasters that dismay those who do not follow *dharma*. "The wise teach the need for humility. Those who are learned in the *Sastras* practise humility as a means to realization. But, far superior to this kind of humility is true humility of mind arising from regard for truth. Humility is not merely a means. In fact, of what avail are our wealth, our intellect and our other possessions? Absolutely nothing. If we get rid of ignorance, the truth will make us humble."<sup>2</sup>

Tennyson, who was not only a great poet but also something of a mystic, sang forth in ecstasy that for a man to emerge into the fullest expression of his exalted nature, as distinct from mere animal existence he must possess three essential qualities:

"Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,  
These three alone lead life to sovereign power."

Tennyson meant that a person must have respect for his own self as a reflection of the Supreme Radiance without being in any manner proud of his talents or conceited about his achievements, that are not possible without God's will. After all, philosophy attempts to interpret the relation of man with his Maker and the place he occupies in the Universe. Rajaji was conscious how insignificant man is when compared with the Infinite Being who is all-pervading and omnipotent "The hardest and most important thing that every human being needs to learn is that he is not the centre of the Universe. There can be no hope unless people realize their own smallness and unimportance, their insignificance in the vastness of space. Every one who is not completely vain and cynical must regard these mysteries with awe and wonder and belief"<sup>3</sup> This is the height of humility in a person who had an unclouded vision about things in general and possessed unchallenged wisdom about the way God rules His creation in His own inscrutable manner.

The second requisite for a man to build up a brilliant career in any path he chooses in life is that he must be master of himself and know himself in and out. Every man is known best to his Maker, though he may hide from his nearest and dearest his drawbacks of character and lapses in conduct from the correct path. "Know thyself" said the ancient philosopher of Greece, echoing the teaching of the *Upanishads*. Tennyson lays emphasis on the necessity for a man to assess his own true worth, so that he may be able to triumph over time and circumstance and master the forces that seek to foil and frustrate him in his life. Rajaji was so conscious of his faults and foibles that he would not think of writing his autobiography lest he fall into the temptation of glossing over his defects and painting his virtues in rosy colours! His self-knowledge was such that he declared his disapproval of writing autobiographies "They contain a little kernel of sense buried in a world of boasting, self-excuse and rhetoric." So he disappointed his intimate friends and innumerable admirers in not writing his own life observing, even when recording confessions, the idea at the back of the autobiographer's mind is that he can well

spare these admissions on account of his many virtues”<sup>4</sup> Rajaji spent all his life in quest of knowledge and wrote on many subjects, both secular and spiritual. But he echoed the words of one of the wisest of the world’s men, Socrates, who had declared: “I know nothing except the fact of my ignorance”

The third essential for a man’s victory against all odds and obstructions in life is, perhaps, the hardest of all hurdles for him to leap over with success—self-control. The *Bhagavad Gita* prescribes various means for attaining salvation or having a glimpse of Truth. ‘An attitude of humility and prayer is necessary for obtaining the vision of Truth that we seek in the field of Eternal Mystery beyond science. To be blessed with a glimpse of the Supreme Reality behind everything, one must live a pure life in thought, word and action, restraining sensuous desires until one is free from even the thought of them.’<sup>5</sup>

Rajaji stresses on the necessity for self-control if a person has to achieve anything worthwhile on the material or the spiritual plane. The brake which a man puts on his bodily desires and mental aberrations will actually give him more joy than if he had let loose his carnal passions and his yearning for wealth, power, fame and other equally evanescent ambitions are effectively banished from his thoughts. Then alone can a person claim to be civilized or cultured, in the true sense. “Civilization is essentially the habitual practice of self-control. It is not the development of more and more forms of indulgence in pleasure with conditions to avoid the consequences of such indulgence. I am not preaching philosophy, elevating pain over pleasure or advocating the avoidance of joy as a sin. It is a philosophy of active life, a way of living, to maintain and increase the readiness of a people for the battles that have to be fought, violent or non-violent. Both call for courage, which deteriorates with a life of indulgence”<sup>6</sup>

The politician in Rajaji was not the most prominent part of his personality. Like his Master he was drawn into politics by force of circumstances and he responded to the call of one who

4. *Swarajya*, 29 July 1967.

5. *The Hindustan Times*, 2 October 1960

6. *Swarajya*, 28 September 1968



came to mould his life and thought thereafter. No leader of India had thought of freedom before his time in the same way as Mahatma Gandhi did. Its content in Gandhiji's concept was not mere political emancipation from its subjection to the British. It also included the ending of the spiritual torpor that had come over the country under alien rule. At the advent of this new planet in the Indian political firmament Rajaji's heart must have echoed the words of the poet:

'Then felt I like some watcher in the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken.'

In the first decade of the twentieth century the cult of the bomb practised by the youth of Bengal in a bid for achieving the country's freedom had failed miserably at the cost of hundreds of young lives, either languishing in prison or being sent to the gallows in an orgy of repression indulged in ruthlessly by the rulers. This new method of facing the formidable strength of Great Britain and its representatives in India was something novel when Mahatma Gandhi launched the non-cooperation movement. There were not a few among the leaders of the old school of political thinking who pooh-poohed the plan, prophesying its absolute failure to achieve *Swaraj*. But they had forgotten the divine guidance in the new leader's rare armoury of truth and *ahimsa*, fused by him into the invulnerable weapon of *satyagraha*. Rajaji was one of the earliest to realise that Gandhi was a man of God whose mission was the emancipation of his countrymen. He recognised the heavenly origin of the effulgence that shone from the gentle eyes of his Master, the light that was akin to the radiance of the sun and the stars, the charms of his toothless smile that had captured the hearts of the whole world, the indomitable spirit that was destined to conquer the courageous cohorts of the most intrepid empire-builders of all time!

The fire of patriotic fervour that kindled to a white heat in Gandhiji's soul yearned to end the subjection of his people and not to rest for a moment until the air of freedom once again blew over the country. A similar irrepressible longing found a response in Rajaji's soul and spurred him on to join the ranks of the freedom-fighters, forgetting wife and children, the future

of his family, the prospect of reaping the rich plums of his profession. "Leave everything and follow me!" said the Master who found no more devoted follower than this son of Salem, turning his back on fame and fortune for ever. Rajaji's patriotism was of the purest kind, gold that had been smelted in the lambent fire of selflessness laid as a humble offering at the Holy Shrine of Liberty! The motives that induced him to join the non-cooperation movement have been set out in one of his entries in his "Jail Diary": "We did not choose civil disobedience, disruption of domestic life and felicity, and untold suffering for the pleasure or the fun of it; but because we prefer these to be continuing in slavery and dishonour. Government can prevent the sufferings of the people, if really their mind is so moved as they make it out to be, by conceding the people's demands, instead of asking them to stop the movement because of the suffering it involves." He was one with Gandhiji in his denunciation of British rule in India and the need for their withdrawal from the country at the earliest moment for they had sapped the vitality of the people, killed their spirit of resistance to foreign domination, and converted them into a nation whose body was dying and whose soul seemed to be non-existent! Rajaji was fully aware that liberty is not lightly won or it can come as a gift from a generous and good-hearted ruler. Freedom is the fruit of the sacrifices and sufferings of generations of people who have gone before us and gave of their best in blood and tears to the cause of the country. We should be prepared to lay at the altar of the motherland all that we can give without yearning for immediate reward. "Think where we should have been," he observes, "if our fathers and grandfathers had made definite sacrifice for freedom's sake. Would we not have carried forward then the battle for freedom with greater faith and vigour? By our sacrifices we have at least made the history of India in this generation an honourable chapter, a relief from the continuous story of base surrender, indifference and dishonour. Even this is an inheritance for our children, so let us not lose faith"<sup>7</sup>

Rajaji<sup>7</sup> was endowed with something of a prophet's vision, a power to foresee the future, perhaps, more than even his

7. *Rajaji's Jail Diary*, 7 January 1922.

Master. His acute intellect could easily comprehend the complexities of a situation and resolve its crisis better than most Indian leaders of his time. His advice to the Congress was that they should concede the principle of Pakistan to the Muslims who did not trust the impartiality of the Hindus when India should become free. His uncanny insight into the mind of Mr. M. A. Jinnah, the Muslim leader, impelled him to suggest this sacrifice in the interests of the independence of India being expedited. But his motives in offering this suggestion to placate the opposition of the Muslim League to the Congress were maligned and misunderstood and he became a *persona non grata* with the other Congress leaders. Even Mahatma Gandhi did not accept this practical and wise proposal of Rajaji because Gandhiji could not with equanimity envisage the dismemberment of India into two, based on the two-nation theory of Mr Jinnah. Rajaji's vision proved prophetic when the British, before they left the country, partitioned it into India and Pakistan as sovereign States.

A second example of his prophetic vision is provided by his forecast about the future when India should attain freedom, made by him when he was neither so famous nor so influential. Mahatma Gandhi had advised the dissolution of the Congress Party after independence. He was aware that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely and Congressmen were not all saints! Rajaji went one step further than his Master in his estimate evidenced by his entry in his "Jail Diary", which almost predicts the state of affairs that prevail in India at the present time. Nearly half a century ago he seems to have had a vision of what India would be under the Congress rule. "We all ought to know that *Swaraj* will not at once or, I think, even for a long time to come, be better government or greater happiness for the people. Elections and their corruptions, injustice and the power of wealth and its tyranny, and inefficiency of administration will make a hell of life as soon as freedom is given to us. Men will look regretfully back to the old regime of comparative justice, and efficient and honest, more or less, peaceful administration. The only thing gained will be that as a race we will be saved from dishonour and subordination. Hope lies only in universal education by which right conduct, fear of God, and love will be developed among the citizens from

childhood. It is only if we succeed in this that *Swaraj* will mean happiness. Otherwise it will mean the grinding injustice and tyranny of wealth. What a beautiful world will it be if everybody were just and god-fearing and they realised the happiness of loving others! Yet there is more practical hope for the ultimate consummation of this ideal in India than elsewhere." What a true forecast of the conditions in India under Congress rule with its brute majority, its attempt to whittle down the fundamental rights of citizens guaranteed by the Constitution, its seeming quest for a socialistic pattern of society that in practice had degenerated into the exaltation of those in power at the expense of the common man.

The star of Rajaji was hitched to the ancient heritage of India, the teachings of the *rishis* in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*, even as he drew his inspiration from the *Bhagavad Gita* and the *Bible*, the ideals of truth and non-violence so ably practised by Mahatma Gandhi whom he considered his Master. Rajaji was, however, not unaware of modern scientific thought but he reminds us that science cannot go beyond a certain limit and stands baffled at the Gate of the Unknown! He felt that *dharma* or the eternal principles of right conduct should govern the lives of men and they should obey the injunctions of their own religion whether it be Hinduism or Islam, Christianity or Buddhism. He declared that *dharma* is the silent whisper of God into men's ears, dictating every step of their lives in the right direction, diverting their path from wrong. Men may not be able to see God but they can distinguish between right and wrong, truth and falsehood, honour and disgrace. He exhorts the people of India to fulfil their *dharma* and to recapture the spirit of Gandhiji in their ways of life and thought. He urges on them to recover the moral glory that the Father of the Nation brought to the name of India among foreign nations even as he won freedom for her in a unique struggle unknown in the history of mankind. "We may not know about God but *dharma* is the connecting link between Him and us. We may not care to inquire into the nature or dimensions of the sun, but we live on sunlight which connects us with the sun. So did Buddha think that we may not seek to investigate or philosophise over God, but he laid all the more emphasis on *dharma*

for that very reason. If we neglect both God and *dharmā*, we shall be ruined.”<sup>8</sup>

After having been an intrepid fighter for the freedom of India, Rajaji had to transform himself, during the latter part of his political career, with regret in his heart into a fighter in order to see that the fruits of freedom were shared by the humblest in the land. That was the tragedy of his life after his many triumphs during a long and luminous career filled with splendid achievements in many fields of human activity. It saddened him beyond words not to be listened to by those in authority. It saddened him that the *Rama Rajya* envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi had been rendered into a mirage by those who had failed to realise the inestimable worth of his visions, founded on virtue and honour, following Heaven's Ineffable Light. It saddened him to see the glorious ideals of his great Master flung in the most unceremonious fashion into the gutter, his immortal memory desecrated by men of low minds and palpably lower standards of purity in public and private life, his incomparable legacy deliberately thrown into the dust-bin of oblivion! It saddened him to observe the attempts at bartering away of India's independence for objectives based on personal power and its perpetuation by the then ruling party.

# Index

- Adharma* 111, 113  
 Africa 72, 112, 154  
 Afro-Asia 112  
 Ahalya 165  
*Ahimsa* 16, 66, 87, 155, 164, 174  
*Ahimsa*, apostle of 16  
 Alipore Bomb Trial 36  
 All India Congress Committee 34  
 All India Radio, Madras 149  
 Amendment, 24th 59  
 'Anand Bhawan' 56  
 Andrews, C F. 102  
 Antoinette, Marie 57  
*Areogitica* 159  
*Arthashastra*, Kautilya's 91  
 Asia 32, 72, 111-12, 124, 154  
 Asian Relations Conference 63  
 Asiatic and African possession,  
     British 33  
 Athens 8, 59, 100  
 Atom Bomb 81  
 Attlee, Clement R 36, 141  
 Audenauer Konrad 141  
 Aurelius, Marcus 115-16, 119, 130  
 Austen, Jane 141, 150  
 Axis Powers 32, 71, 81, 111  
  
 Bacchus 31  
 Bacon, Francis 114, 119, 132, 150  
 Bangalore, Central College 9  
 Banks, nationalisation of 49-50  
 Bard of Avon 62, 119, 132  
  
 Bardoli 22, 37, 51  
 Bengal 36, 174  
*Bhagvad Gita*, the 1, 99, 102, 114,  
     117-18, 124, 130, 153, 173  
 Bharti, Subramania 152  
*Bible* 117, 119, 132, 134, 150-51, 177  
 Big Powers, 2-3, 17, 66, 72, 76, 81-  
     3, 91, 96, 109  
 Boers, the 11, 26  
 Bose Subhas Chandra 26, 36  
 Bradley, Omar S 78  
 British Commonwealth 36  
 British Government 33  
 British Parliament 31, 62  
 British rule 48, 55  
 Buddha 23-4, 42, 99, 110, 115, 119,  
     126, 130, 165, 177  
 Bunyan, John 119  
 Burke, Edmund 114, 129, 132, 150,  
     161  
 Burns, Robert 152  
 Byron 148  
  
 Cabinet, Central 20, 64  
 Calcutta Bar 36  
 Centenary Year, Gandhi's 17, 24  
 Chariar, C Vijayaraghava 10, 14  
 Charles I, King 169  
 Chavan 50  
 China 35, 68-9, 84, 154  
 China invades India 67-78  
 Christ, Jesus 3, 23, 29, 59, 107,

- 119, 126, 134, 140, 156, 163, 167  
 Christianity 87, 99, 102  
 Civil Disobedience 13, 28, 31, 175  
 Civil War in USA 146, 154  
 Coleridge, Samuel Taylor 113  
 Collective farming 158  
 Communism 3, 38, 45, 48, 50, 57, 60-1, 92, 137, 148, 165, 167  
 Communist Party 48, 80  
 Concentration Camp 159  
 Confucius 115, 126, 130, 163  
 Congress Government 6, 32, 47-9, 51-2, 59, 61, 158-61  
 Congress (Party) 2, 4, 5, 10, 14, 19, 26, 29, 31-32, 34-5, 38, 40, 43, 47, 49-50, 59, 62, 80, 147, 166-7, 176  
 Congress Working Committee 12  
 Conservatives 58  
 Constitution 3, 36, 41-2, 44-5, 48-9, 51, 59, 61, 79, 107, 109, 158-9, 162, 167, 177  
 'Coolie Barrister' 36  
 Cromwell, 169  
 Dakshinেশwar, Saint of 143  
 Darwin 45  
 Das, Chittaranjan 26, 36  
 Democracy 41-3, 46, 48, 50, 52-3, 55-6, 62, 94, 147, 156, 159-62, 167 and communism 57 and totalitarianism 57 parliamentary 52, 01  
 Depressed classes 29-30  
 Dharma 27, 44-5, 62, 86, 92, 100, 112, 118, 120, 124, 126, 130, 143, 149, 151, 161, 166, 170-1, 177-8  
 Dickens 133, 141, 148, 150  
 Dictatorships, 48, 94  
 DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) 88  
 Drenacharya 118  
 Duryodhana 118, 120  
 Economy of nature 167  
 Edward VIII 141  
 England 28, 107, 109  
 England, Constitution of 56  
 Europe 28, 32, 159, 164  
 Family Planning 2  
 Fascism 33, 72, 81, 92  
 Father of the Nation 3, 6, 15, 37, 39, 43, 51, 79, 87, 161, 168, 177  
 France 44, 57, 67, 82, 84, 107, 109, 158  
 Freedom 25, 27-8, 35-6, 41, 47, 53, 56  
 Freedom struggle 32, 40  
 French Revolution 57, 154, 159  
 Gardiner, A G. 129  
 Gandhi, Indira 51  
 Gandhi, Mahatma (also Gandhiji) and ahimsa 16, 25 and independence 78 arrested 29 assassinated 168 authorised by congress to start non-co-operation movement 10-11 condemns Congress government 91 defines democracy 56 defines non-violence 66 differs with Rajagopalachari 4 gets resolution on quit India passed 32 in the service of poor 91 Luis Fisher interviews 34 offers *satyagraha* 21 opposed to division of India 33 prayer meetings of 116 prophecy about Nehru 40, 143 Starts struggle for *swaraj* 26-8 warns against seven sins 39 writes to British Premier 30 writes to Rajaji 22 views on Hindu Muslim unity 31, 67 views on prohibition 87 views on trusteeship 46 views on truth 106 views on untouchability 5, 23, 31, 87  
 Gandhi Peace Foundation 17, 84, 145  
 Garibi Hatao 80

- Gayatri Devi, Maharani, 141, 146-7  
 German 64, 141, 159  
 Ghose, Aurobindo 2, 36, 99, 122  
*Gita*, the 41, 117, 122-3, 135  
 Gold Control Bill 91  
 Gold Nationalisation Bill 91  
 Goldsmith, Oliver 4, 158  
 Gorky, Maxim 141, 150  
 Government of India Act 31  
 Great Britain 12, 19-20, 30, 34-5, 44, 46, 52, 58, 64, 66, 74, 82, 84, 141, 158, 166, 174  
 Gujarat Club Ahmedabad 36  
 Gujarat Vidyapith 2  
  
 Hanuman 132, 168  
*Harjain*, the 32-3  
 Harijans 23  
 Harishchandra 112  
 Himalya 138  
*Hindu*, the 14, 59, 70-71  
 Hinduism 5, 23, 30-31, 87, 98, 103, 108, 122-3, 135, 144  
 Hindu Muslim Unity 4, 31, 33-4  
 Hiroshima 17, 81, 109  
 Hitler 81  
 Hitlerism 12  
  
 Independence 5, 18, 19, 20, 34, 35-6, 39, 42, 86, 127, 143, 157, 162-3, 168, 178  
 India 4, 5, 22, 25, 27-31, 64, 71  
 Indian Civil Service 36  
 Indian National Army 36  
 Industrialisation 40, 44-5, 89, 92  
 Inflation 93  
 Interim National Government 65  
 Internationalism 69  
 Iqbal, Sir Mohamed 33  
 Islam 87, 99  
 Iyenger, Charavarti 4, 9  
 Iyenger Kasturi Ranga 14  
  
 Jail Diary, Rajaji's 27, 175-6  
 Japanese at India's doors 32, 35  
 Japanese Cardinals 146  
 Japanese British victory of 33  
 Jews 59, 134  
 Jhansi, Rani of (Lakshmbai) 147, 165  
 Jinnah, Mohammed Ali 4, 19, 33, 176  
 Johnson, Samuel 147  
 Judaism 99  
 Judiciary, Independent 44  
  
*Kaamadhenu* 56  
 Kabir 141, 165  
 Kaldasa 114, 117, 150  
 Kamban 117, 150  
 Kennedy, President 18, 83, 145  
 Khayyam, Omar 129  
 Kipling 151, 168  
 Kripalani, J B 167  
 Krishna, Lord Sri 118, 126, 140, 165  
 Krushchev 72-3, 145  
*Kural*, the 1, 115-6, 129-30, 151  
  
 Labour Party of Great Britain 36, 58  
 Ladakh 68  
 Lakshmana 2, 132, 148  
 Laksi, Harold J 58  
 Lamb, Charles 150  
 Leir, Prof Werner 68  
 Lenin 28, 167  
 Leningrad 83  
 Lester, Muriel 141  
 Liberals 26, 58  
 Light of Liberty 26  
 Lincoln Abraham 9, 141, 146, 154, 160  
 Linlithgow Lord 32  
 London 3, 29, 81  
 Louis XVI 57  
  
 McDonald Ramsay (British Premier) 29-30  
 Machiavelli 119  
 Machiavellian 64, 81  
 Madras 10, 14-5  
 Madras Legislative Assembly 20, 34  
 Madras Prohibition Act 31, 88, 171



- Magna Carta 57  
*Mahabharata* 1, 114, 116-20, 123, 129-31, 139, 151  
 Maharishi, Ramana 99, 115, 165  
 Matsya Avatar 17, 137  
 Minimum Government 47, 160-61  
 Mohamed 119, 126  
 Moors, empire of the 120  
 Morley, John 129  
 Mountbatten, Lord 4, 20  
 Muslim League 34, 176  
 Muslims, separate state for  
*My Experiments with Truth* 9
- Nagaswaram 11, 134  
 Naidu, Sarojini 26  
 Nehru, Jawaharlal 13, 20, 26, 37-8, 40, 43-5, 60, 63, 65-6, 130, 141-3, 169  
 Nehru, Motilal 26  
 Nepotism 87  
 Neutralism 68  
*New York Times*, the 83  
 Nobel, Dr. Alfred 69  
 Nobel Prize 69  
 Non alignment, policy of 40, 65-6  
 Non-cooperation Movement 10-11, 16, 39, 134, 159, 174-5  
 Non-proliferation Treaty 84  
 Non-violence 6, 16, 18, 24-6, 32, 36, 42, 79, 83, 92, 111-2, 165, 168, 177  
 Nuclear arms 17, 72  
 Nuclear disarmament 2, 17, 73, 81, 109, 145  
 Nuclear explosions 81
- Opposition 42, 109, 111, 142, 161-2  
   in Parliament 45, 52  
 "Ordeal of fire" 31  
 Over-government 160-61
- Palkhiwala N A. 38  
 Pakistan 4, 19, 33, 74, 155, 176  
 Panchayat Raj 43  
 Parambamsa, Sri Ramakrishna 99, 122-3, 143, 147, 157, 165  
 Parliament of religions 123  
 Parliamentary Government 45
- Party System 58  
 Patel Vallabhbhai 26, 36, 51, 141-3  
 Pauling Dr Linus 82  
 Payne, Robert 24  
 Permit Licence Raj 49-50  
 Pope John XXII 141, 145-6  
 Prakasam, Tanguturi 26, 36  
 Prasad, Dr Rajendra 26, 80, 141-2, 161  
 Press, American 83  
 Princes, Indian 51  
 Privy Purses 51  
 Prohibition 5, 87-9, 155
- Quit India, resolution on 32
- Rai, Lala Lajpat 26  
 Rajagopalachari (*also* Rajaji)  
   against writing autobiography 8, 172  
   an internationalist 69  
   and Bhagvad Gita 122  
   and Congress Government 68  
   and freedom struggle 25  
   and Hinduism 98  
   and Nehru 61  
   and Nuclear Powers 81  
   and religion (Dharma) 102, 106, 108, 110, 120, 134  
   and Satyagraha 27  
   and world peace 69, 73, 81, 83  
   as Chief Minister of Madras 31, 50, 55, 88, 111  
   as Governor General 20, 169  
   as Home Minister 65  
   as writer 173  
   disagrees with Gandhi 35  
   imposes prohibition 31  
   in non cooperation movement 11  
   in Rome 145  
   meets Gandhiji 14  
   on mission to America 83-4  
   Public life of 63  
   Speeches of 137  
   Views on authoritarianism 72, 159

- views on bank nationalisation 49
- views on classical writers 150
- views on civilization 162
- views on co-existence 75
- views on communism 48, 67
- views on division of India 4, 19, 175-77
- views on Mahabharata 117-8, 131
- views on massive majority 59
- views on non-alignment 66-8
- views on opposition 62, 80
- views on privy purses 51
- views on prohibition 88
- views on religion 96
- views on spiritualization of politics 64
- views on spiritualism 97
- views on statism 45, 48, 60
- views on Tashkent Agreement 75
- views on untouchability 5
- views on *Vedanta* 126
- writes about Gandhiji 139-40
- Rama, Sri 2, 141, 148, 165
- Raman Dr C V 82
- Ramanujacharya Sir 4, 99, 122, 165
- Rama Raja* 2, 26, 87, 155, 170
- Ramayana* 1, 22, 114, 116, 120, 129-31, 139, 141, 151
- Ramdas 22, 165
- Rao, Khasa Subba 141, 149
- Rao, Navratna Rama 10, 141, 148
- Ravana 120, 147, 178
- Rights, fundamental 3, 42, 47, 59, 79, 109, 158-60, 162, 177
- Rolland, Romans 28
- Rome 120
- Round Table Conference, second 29, 31
- Rowlatt Act 14
- Rowlatt Bill 14
- Roy, P C 151
- Russel Burtrand 119, 150
- Russian Revolution 60
- Sabarmati Asram 16
- Salem 10, 14, 31, 169
- Samjivayya, Dr. Damodaran 39
- Sankara 92, 114, 165
- Sankaracharya 99, 117, 122
- Sastri, Lal Bahadur 74
- Satyagraha* 11, 13, 15, 21, 27-9, 92, 154, 174
- Satyam and Dharmam*, ideals of 42
- Scott 148
- Secularism 78
- Sevagram, saint of 5
- Shakespeare 8, 62, 114, 116-7, 119, 132-4, 148, 150
- Shaw, George Bernard 129, 150
- Socialism 44, 48, 51, 60, 159
- Socialist pattern of society 44, 50, 62, 80, 159
- Socrates 5, 8, 28, 59, 100, 112, 115, 139, 140, 151, 163, 167
- Soviet Russia (also USSR) 39, 44, 48, 50, 60, 64, 67, 81, 82, 84, 109, 111, 126, 151, 158
- Spanish institution 159
- Stalin 167
- State Socialism 92
- Subbulakshmi, sister 146-7
- Statism 45, 53, 60
- Stevenson Robert Louis 133, 148
- Swaraj 16 19, 26, 28, 31-3, 38, 55, 62-3, 79, 83, 87, 159, 160, 163, 174, 176-7
- Swatantra Party 39, 80, 147, 167
- Sword of Democles 158
- Tagore, Rabindranath 86
- Tamil Nadu 88
- Tashkent Peace Agreement 74-5
- Tennyson, Alfred 171-2
- Thackarey 133, 148, 150
- Thompson, Francis 150
- Thoreau, 114, 150-51
- Tibet 68
- Tibor Mende, French journalist 48
- Tiruvalluvar 1, 114, 116, 129-30
- Totalitarian rule 44-5, 55-6, 60
- Totalitarianism 48, 58, 61, 167
- Toynbee, Dr. Arnold 98-9, 122
- Travancore, Maharaja of 5

- Trollope, Anthony 141, 150  
 Two Nation Theory 176  
 Unemployment 97  
 UNO (United Nations Organisation) 75  
 Untouchability 5, 23, 155-6  
 Upanished, Chandogya 75  
 Upanishad, Sri Ramakrishna 144  
*Upanishads*, 1, 99-100, 102-3, 114, 119, 124, 130, 137, 139, 144, 170, 177  
 USA (United States of America, also America) 17-8, 28, 44, 52, 58, 64, 67, 81-2, 84, 107, 109, 111, 145-6, 154, 158, 164, 168  
     Constitution of USA 56  
 Vaishnavite 4, 102  
 Valmiki 114, 117, 140, 148, 150  
 Vedanta 6, 21, 102, 103, 124, 125, 126, 135, 136, 144, 163  
 Vedas 1, 99, 100, 114, 119, 130, 139, 170, 177  
 Visvesuraya 141  
 Vivekananda, Swami 99, 123, 141, 143, 144, 157  
 Vyas 114, 117  
 Washington, George 57, 141, 146  
 Western Powers 72-3  
 Willkie, Wendall 17  
 Wolfe, General 74  
 Women's Education, Madras Service of 146  
 Wordsworth, William 8, 100, 106, 138, 153  
 Working Committee, ultimatum by 32  
 World Government 17, 64, 69, 76  
 World War, second 32, 36, 75, 81, 84, 109, 154  
 Yeravada Pact 29  
 Zoroaster 119

